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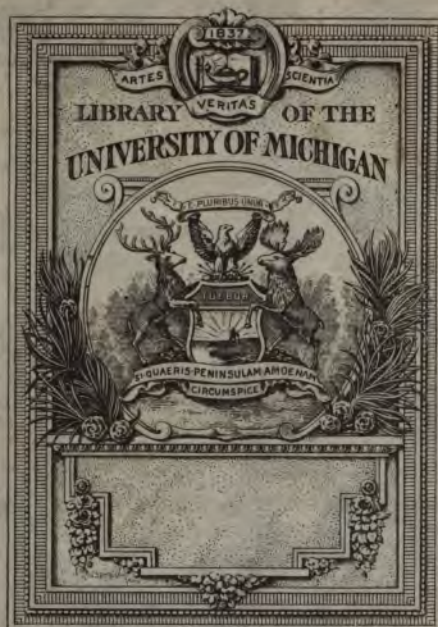
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THE ADVANCE-GUARD  
OF WESTERN  
CIVILIZATION



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*Law. Robertson*



THE ADVANCE-GUARD  
OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

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BY  
JAMES R. <sup>Roberts</sup>GILMORE  
(EDMUND KIRKE)

AUTHOR OF "THE REAR-GUARD OF THE REVOLUTION," "JOHN SEVIER  
AS A COMMONWEALTH-BUILDER," "AMONG THE PINES," ETC.

"We are the advance-guard of civilization,  
and our way is across the continent."

JAMES ROBERTSON, 1780.

NEW YORK  
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY  
1888

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## PREFACE.

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THE substance of the present volume was given to the public in a course of lectures which the writer delivered before the Lowell Institute, of Boston, in the winter of 1887-'88. Those lectures are here amplified and enlarged into what is intended to be a full narrative of an episode which is, perhaps, the most unique and remarkable in American history. The narrative is the result of eight years' careful study of early events in the Southwest, nearly four of which years were passed upon the ground where the events occurred, and it is the writer's sincere conviction that it may be accepted as authentic history. To make sure that it should be authentic, the proof-sheets of the volume have been submitted for revision and correction to the Hon. John M. Lea, President of the Tennessee Historical Society, the Rev. Dr. John Berrien Lindsley, late Chancellor of the University of Nashville, and the Hon. Randall M. Ewing—three gentlemen who are undoubtedly better acquainted with the early history of the Southwest than any others now living. They have read carefully this volume, and also the writer's two preceding ones on collateral subjects—"The Rear-Guard of the Revolu-

tion" and "John Sevier as a Commonwealth-Builder"—and their suggestions in regard to them all have been followed in the minutest particulars. The writer is therefore confident that all that is related in the three books will bear the closest scrutiny. Some valuable notes furnished to the present volume by Mr. Ewing, having been received too late to be embodied in the text, are inserted in Appendix B.

The three volumes cover a neglected period of American history, and they disclose facts well worthy the attention of historians—namely, that these Western men turned the tide of the American Revolution, and subsequently saved the newly-formed Union from disruption, and thereby made possible our present great republic. This should be enough to secure for their story an attentive hearing, had it not the added charm of presenting to view three characters—John Sevier, James Robertson, and Isaac Shelby—who are as worthy of the imitation of our American youth as any in their country's history.

In the preparation of this volume the writer has had the advantage of personal intercourse with the descendants of the men he portrays, and he has also consulted—so far as he knows—all that has been written upon the subject. A list of these authorities he has given in the preface to "John Sevier as a Commonwealth-Builder." In addition to them, in the present book he has made use of Gayarré's "Spanish Domination in Louisiana" and the "American State Papers," the fifth volume of

which reports very fully the Indian affairs of that early period. He has also in one part of his work received valuable aid from John Mason Brown, Esq., of Louisville, Kentucky. To him, and to Hon. John M. Lea, Dr. John Berrien Lindsley, of Nashville, Tennessee, and the Hon. Randall M. Ewing, he would here record his grateful acknowledgments.

He will merely add, in the words of William H. Stephens: "I speak for that heroic State who was baptized in her infancy with the sprinkling of Revolutionary blood on King's Mountain; who, five years afterward, struck again for independence under the banner of the daring young State of Franklin; who grappled, single-handed and alone, for fifty years, with the dusky warriors of the forest in all their battles from the Kentucky line to the Southern Gulf; who beat back the British legions at New Orleans; who smote the false Spaniard at Pensacola; who rushed with Taylor into the breach at Monterey, and shared in the triumphal march from Vera Cruz to Mexico." In this and my two preceding volumes I have endeavored to rescue from oblivion her earliest and greatest heroes; and, if I have done my work as faithfully as I ought, historians will no longer ignore their existence, but be swift to assign to them the exalted places to which they are entitled in American history.

JAMES R. GILMORE.

(EDMUND KIRKE.)

NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT, *August, 1888.*



# CONTENTS.

---

## CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
ON THE OUTPOSTS . . . . .	1

The important crisis in American affairs when the first settlements were formed beyond the Alleghanies—The colonies about to revolt, and Great Britain preparing to crush them by a front and rear assault—The rear attack beaten off by a handful of Western settlers—These settlers the advance-guard of Western civilization—Their grand qualities—Nothing more heroic in their history than their settlement of the district along the Cumberland—Their journey across Kentucky to the present site of Nashville—Description of the country—The settlers erect a fort and organize themselves into a military body—Select locations for their dwellings—Perilous voyage of the women and children down the Holston and Tennessee—Intended attack of the Indians frustrated by the elements—The settlers form a civil government—Their mode of life—The first victim to savage atrocity—The Indians surround and attempt to starve out the settlements—Daring raid of Robertson—The first wedding at Nashville—A desperate war—Settlers threatened with starvation—Inflexible resolution of Robertson—He breaks through the Indian lines to secure ammunition—Returns from the perilous trip in safety and is received with great rejoicing—Attack on Freeland's Station beaten off by Robertson—This Robertson's last fight with the Chickasaws—He soon afterward meets the Chickasaw king, Piomingo, and contracts with him a friendship that lasts till his death.



## CHAPTER II.

A RAIN OF FIRE . . . . .	PAGE 29
--------------------------	------------

The character of James Robertson—His belief that he was chosen by Providence to be the forerunner of Western civilization—His unquestioning faith and great moral courage—A remarkable sleet—War breaks out with the Cherokees—The fort at Nashville and the life of Robertson saved by the intrepidity of his wife—The whole settlement a battle-ground—A hostile coalition of the Northern tribes—Perilous state of the settlements—Instances of heroism—David Hood hoodwinks the Indians—A company of discredited royalties—The scouts and their skill in woodcraft—Great mortality among the settlers—Their mode of life in this rain of fire—Settlers propose to abandon the colony—This opposed by Robertson.

## CHAPTER III.

THE DAY DAWNING . . . . .	56
---------------------------	----

A savage warfare—Thrilling escape of a woman—An unexpected re-enforcement—Toleration of Robertson—News of the surrender of Cornwallis—Contemptible treatment of her soldiers by North Carolina—Her "bounty" warrants—A renewal of Indian hostilities—The Chickamaugas attack Buchanan's Station—Peace made with the Cherokees—The settlers abandon the forts and dwell in their homesteads—North Carolina erects the settlements into a county—Nashville prospers—Robertson elected to the Legislature—Establishes a court—Some of its enactments—A distillery erected—A primitive currency—Pioneer preachers—A road opened to Clinch River—A store opened at Nashville—Cloudless prospects, but a storm brewing.

## CHAPTER IV.

A RAID UPON THE CREEKS . . . . .	77
----------------------------------	----

Spanish complications—Importance of the Cumberland colony as holding disputed territory—Prophetic views of the Spanish minister—McGillivray, the Creek chief, calls the attention of Spain to the danger threatened by the settlers to her North American possessions—The character and appearance of this

## CONTENTS.

ix

PAGE

man—He forms a treaty with the Spaniards and attempts to combine the Southern tribes for the extermination of the settlers—Builds a station on the Tennessee, whence he makes constant raids upon the Cumberland—The station discovered by Piomingo, who informs Robertson—His narrow escape from death at the hands of the Indians—The watchful sagacity of the settlers' dogs—Letter of Piomingo to Robertson, which informs him of the hostility of Spain—He sends two of his chiefs to guide Robertson to McGillivray's station—The Coldwater expedition and defeat of the Creeks—Extraordinary endurance of Hugh Rogan.

### CHAPTER V.

#### DARK DAYS UPON THE CUMBERLAND . . . . . 106

McGillivray resolves upon an overwhelming effort to exterminate the Cumberland colony—Aid given to Robertson by Sevier, which enables him to beat off the attack—Activity and sleepless vigilance of the scouts—Remonstrance of Robertson to the Legislature—His memorial respectfully considered and the settlers fully authorized to take care of themselves—Robertson sends peace messengers to McGillivray—The embassy courteously received, but the war continues—Murder of Colonel Anthony Bledsoe—Intrepidity of Hugh Rogan—How Colonel Bledsoe wrote his will—Robertson retorts upon McGillivray his double-dealing.

### CHAPTER VI.

#### THE SPANISH COMPLICATION . . . . . 125

A wider view of the situation—The Cumberland colony only the advance-guard of a larger host who were scaling the Alleghanies—A convention in Kentucky and its results—Importance to the settlers of the navigation of the Mississippi—John Jay's negotiations with the Spanish envoy, Gardoqui—Jay proposes to Congress to yield the navigation of the Mississippi for twenty years—The proposition received with universal indignation at the West—Open talk in Kentucky of forming an independent government—The opportunity favorable for an ambitious man, unscrupulous as to means—Such a man appears in James Wilkinson—His career and disreputable course in the army—

The war over, he seeks a fresh field for his activity in Kentucky—His plan to secure an exclusive right to navigate the Mississippi.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TREASON OF WILKINSON . . . . . 145

How he made his attempt to capture the Spanish trade—His bribe to Gayoso—Sends a load of produce down the Mississippi and follows it by land to New Orleans—His produce saved from seizure by Daniel Clark—His reception by Governor Miro—Forms an agreement with him to swing Kentucky into the arms of Spain—Returns to Kentucky with a permit for unrestricted trade with New Orleans—Wins over to his treasonable design some of the leading men in Kentucky—A convention called for July 28, 1788, to consider the separation of Kentucky from Virginia—Wilkinson seduces a majority of the delegates to then vote the district out of the Union—Character and influence of Isaac Shelby—The Spanish minister sends an envoy to John Sevier with overtures of an alliance with Spain—Sevier draws from the envoy a disclosure of Wilkinson's project, and warns Shelby of it in time for the latter to frustrate his treason—Wilkinson's account of the proceedings of the convention to Miro, which fully reveals his treason.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DECEITFUL PEACE . . . . . 182

Miro's long-continued overtures to Robertson—Correspondence of General Daniel Smith with the Spanish governor—Robertson refuses all dealings with the Spaniards—His remarkable letter to John Sevier, and incorruptible patriotism—His narrow escape—Andrew Jackson's first military exploit—His original orthography—News arrives of the adoption of the Constitution, and inauguration of Washington—Great rejoicing among the settlers in consequence—Treaty with the Creeks and Cherokees—Population of the Cumberland colony—Great increase in the number of stations—Sevier's view of the Indians.

# CONTENTS.

xi

## CHAPTER IX.

A STORM ON THE CUMBERLAND . . . . .	PAGE 197
-------------------------------------	-------------

Affairs in Kentucky—Miro sets a watch upon Wilkinson, who, though appointed to the United States Army, continues his treasonable connection with the Spaniards—Large influx of immigration—Washington's fruitless overtures to Spain—Treachery of McGillivray—Cherokee spies appear in the settlements—War begins with several bloody butcheries—General uprising of the people—Another narrow escape of Robertson—Heroic repulse of seven hundred Indians by fifteen men and thirty women behind the log walls of Buchanan's Station—Among the rescuers a stripling, named Joseph Brown, who is instrumental in crushing the Chickamaugas.

## CHAPTER X.

CAPTIVITY AMONG THE CHICKAMAUGAS . . . . .	227
--	-----

The treacherous murder of Colonel Brown and his oldest sons near Nick-a-jack Cave—His younger son, Joseph, made captive—He is about to be killed by a chief, who predicts that if allowed to live he will pilot an army there and destroy them all, but is saved by a wretched Frenchwoman—Is held in captivity nearly a year, and endures innumerable hardships, but is then ransomed by John Sevier—After four years removes to the Cumberland, and offers to guide Robertson to the secret haunts of the Chickamaugas.

## CHAPTER XI.

SPANISH MACHINATIONS . . . . .	244
--------------------------------	-----

Two more years of savage warfare on the Cumberland—Only fifteen of the original settlers had escaped slaughter—Evan Shelby, Isaac Bledsoe, and three brothers of the scout Castleman are killed—Retaliatory raid of Castleman—Heroic exploits of Jonathan Robertson and "Grandma Hays"—Joseph Brown is wounded—The settlers appeal to be led against the Chickamaugas—The attitude of the State Department—Carondelet now Spanish governor—His energy and overtures to the Indians—Engages the Cherokees in the hostilities against Robertson—

Piomingo's letters to Robertson, who supplies him with arms and ammunition—Impudent letter of Carondelet to Robertson, and his courteous reply—Spanish intrigues against Piomingo, and his reported assassination.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE CHICKAMAUGA EXPEDITION . . . . . 275

The Spaniards form an extensive coalition of the Indians against the Americans—Robertson induces the Legislature to ask the protection of Congress, which body adjourns without acting on the subject—In these circumstances Robertson decides upon an expedition against the Chickamaugas—He sends for Joseph Brown, who explores a route through the forest to Nick-a-jack, and then guides an army of five hundred and fifty men to the destruction of the Chickamauga towns—Robertson's report of the expedition to the governor—Dissatisfaction of the Government, and resignation of Robertson as brigadier-general—The justification of his course by Congress.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## PIOMINGO . . . . . 293

His unexpected appearance on the Cumberland—Leads a body of warriors to the help of General Wayne—The Creeks continue their warfare—Attack on Valentine Sevier's station—Unpleasant correspondence between Governor Blount and Secretary Pickering—Hostilities between the Creeks and Chickasaws—Robertson gives aid to Piomingo in arms and men—The Creeks attack the Chickasaw capital, and are ignominiously repulsed—Piomingo offers the Creeks peace, which they accept, but their younger warriors treacherously invade the Chickasaw country—They are again repulsed, and a genuine peace is then brought about through the influence of Gayoso and Robertson.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## CONCLUSION . . . . . 311

Efforts of Genet, the French minister, to arouse the West to drive the Spaniards from Louisiana—George Rogers Clark

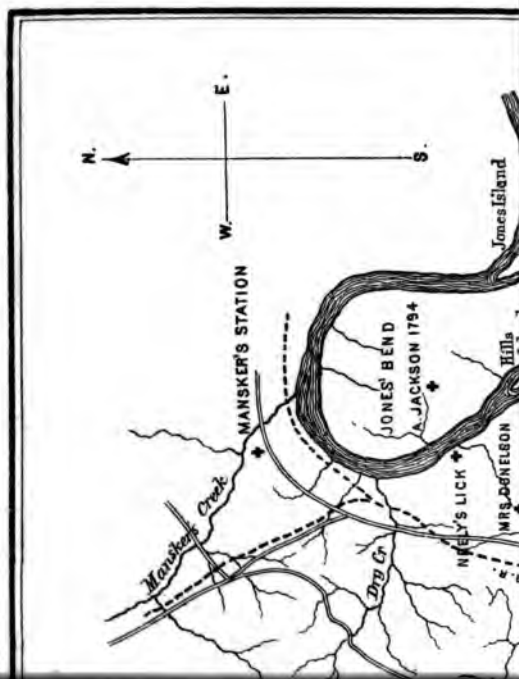
speedily enlists over two thousand men for an expedition against New Orleans—Carondelet, thoroughly alarmed, makes hasty preparations for defense, and sends an emissary to Kentucky to renew the attempt at disunion made in 1788—Remonstrance of the Spanish minister against the hostile preparations in Kentucky—Jefferson urges Governor Shelby to put down the movement—Shelby's curious logic—Washington sends a special messenger to Shelby, and the hostile expedition is abandoned—The Spanish Cabinet, alarmed at the threatening attitude of Western affairs, and the undisguised hostility of Shelby, now concludes a treaty which opens the Mississippi to American commerce—A general peace follows, in which the Cumberland colony is astonishingly prosperous—Its enormous increase in fifty years—Robertson a private citizen, but still the patriarch of the settlements—His friendship with Sevier, and influence over the Chocktaws and Chickasaws—His residence among the Chickasaws at a critical period, and last services to his country—His character and death.





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# THE ADVANCE-GUARD OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION.

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## CHAPTER I.

### ON THE OUTPOSTS.

THE crisis was great in American affairs when the first Western settlers took their way across the Alleghanies. The country was on the eve of the Revolution. The revolted colonies were about to engage in a death-grapple with the gigantic power across the ocean. Not less than fifty thousand savage warriors beyond the mountains were to be enlisted by that power to descend upon the rear of the colonists, while its regular forces should undertake the subjugation of the seaboard. Infolded thus in the coils of an anaconda, it was expected that the infant republic would be strangled in its cradle; and this result might have been realized, but for the gathering of a small band of riflemen upon the banks of the Watauga, along the western base of the Alleghanies. That handful of riflemen beat back the rear assault. On three distinct occasions they cut the anaconda coil in

## 2    ADVANCE-GUARD OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION.

which the British sought to envelop and crush the struggling colonies, and so securely did they hold the mountain-passes that in all the war no savage band ever broke through to carry the torch and the tomahawk to the seaboard settlements. Thus were they the immovable rear-guard of the Revolution. And they were more than that.

They were the advance-guard of Western civilization. They hewed out a pathway through the wilderness for the uncounted millions who are to people the western half of this continent; and they did this while exposed by day and by night, for more than twenty years, to the assaults of a foe more crafty, cruel, and treacherous than any ever encountered in modern times. They plowed their fields with an armed sentry beside them, and never went to their beds, or gathered to religious worship, without the trusty rifle within reach of their hands. A race less heroic would have succumbed to the hardships and dangers they encountered; but in them hardship merely developed endurance, and danger a courage that was without fear, and swift to grapple with enemies of twenty times their number. And they were not merely hard toilers and brave fighters; they were thinking men, with clear ideas of civil policy, and so generally educated that not more than one of them among a hundred has handed his name down to us signed with a cross. No people without their peculiar qualities could have been the pioneers of the hundred millions of freemen who are to occupy the valleys of the

Mississippi and its tributaries before the close of another century.

Nothing more heroic is recorded of these people than the migration of three hundred and eighty of their number from Watauga into the wilds of West Tennessee, under the lead of James Robertson, in the winter of 1780. They left the ease and security of a well-ordered settlement, and, for a second time, encountered the perils of unknown forests and rivers, to found a civilized community in the heart of an untrodden wilderness, where they would be surrounded by savage enemies, and three hundred miles remote from the most westerly white settlement. It was the coldest winter ever known on this continent; their way would be beset by lurking enemies, and they far beyond all human succor; yet they set out trusting only in God, their own strong arms, and their unerring rifles. One hundred and thirty of them were women and children. These, unable to endure the fatigue of the long overland journey, were sent, under John Donelson and a guard of thirty men, in boats down the Holston and Tennessee; while the remainder, under Robertson, followed the five-hundred-mile trace which had been blazed by hunters through the woods of Kentucky. Their destination was what was then known as the French Lick of the Cumberland; and it was expected that the party under Robertson would arrive long enough in advance of the other to have in readiness homes for the reception of the coming women and children.

Robertson's party set out from Watauga about the

#### 4    ADVANCE-GUARD OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION.

1st of November, 1779; but the route through the woods soon became deep with snow, and, encumbered as they were with cattle, and pack-horses laden with provisions and farming-utensils, their progress was slow, and they did not arrive at the Cumberland till Christmas-day in 1779. They suffered much from cold on the way, and found the river frozen so solid as to admit of the passing over of their animals. Crossing at once, they began building on the bluff that lines the southern bank the fort and the half-score of log-houses which were the nucleus of the present capital of Tennessee.

The place is beautiful for situation. The bluff is of a height of from sixty to eighty feet, and at its base flows a wide and winding river; while away at the south and southwest rises a chain of conical hills, crowned then with towering oaks, walnuts, and poplars, which had stood there for untold centuries. On both banks of the river lies a valley about twenty miles in width, its surface undulating, but ascending in long-gradual slopes, here and there dotted with isolated eminences. One of these, covering several acres, and resembling a huge burial-mound, breaks abruptly but symmetrically from the plain and overlooks all the surrounding country. It is now the site of the Capitol building, and is distant about half a mile from where the fort was located. Other hills, rising still higher, and at greater distances, seem designed by Nature for fortifications, and events have fulfilled the design; for their crumbling breastworks bear to-day the names of

Negley, Morton, and Casino, which have become famous in recent history.

All these hills were, at the period of which I write, covered with thick forests, while on the bluffs, and along the margin of two narrow streams which flow down from the encircling hills, were wide brakes of cane, standing ten and twenty feet high—excellent fodder for cattle, but at the same time secure hiding-places for the settler's lurking enemies. Dense woods covered the country in every direction, except around the fort, and the spring which gave name to the place. There a few heaps of decaying logs showed where the French hunters under Charville had built their cabins in 1714; and the trodden cane told of the countless herds of deer and buffalo which had frequented the spring for innumerable ages. These two facts had given the name of French Lick to the locality. The soil was deep and fertile, and the land abundantly watered; and seen, when covered with foliage, the spot would have been most inviting to a settler. But now it was everywhere clad in ice and snow—one broad expanse of frozen magnificence, silent, cheerless, and desolate. Firm of purpose and stout of heart must the men have been who could set about building their homes in such an icy wilderness, encompassed as it was by a cloud of savage enemies.

The fort erected, the two hundred and twenty-six settlers already arrived organized themselves into a military body, electing Robertson colonel, John Donelson lieutenant-colonel, Robert Lucas major, and George Free-



land, Isaac Bledsoe, James Lapier, Andrew Buchanan, and John Rains, captains. Donelson was still away with the women and children ; but all of these men were yet to write their names in a bloody history. Thus organized, the settlers separated, to select locations and prepare homes for their coming families. Twenty miles of fertile country was within sight of the fort ; but, having the pioneer's ideas of space, they spread for forty miles up and down the Cumberland, and located their lands around no less than eight "stations"—stockades, inclosing block-houses, and strong enough to resist assault from any small band of Indians. In the event of attack from a large body it was expected the settlers would concentrate at the Bluff, where the fort was intended to be strong enough to resist any number of assailants that would be likely to come against it. Robertson, however, discouraged this scattering of the settlers. "Keep in sight of the bluff," he said, "where we can see your signal-fire or hear your alarm-gun. The outlying stations will be the first to invite the savages ; and if you are too far away we shall not know of an attack, or be able to come to the rescue." It had been well for the settlers if they had heeded these words of Robertson. Some of the outlying stations were not only far away, but hastily or carelessly constructed. Those built under Robertson's own eye were patterned after the one erected by John Sevier at Watauga, which had withstood assault from a strong force under the Cherokee king, Oconostota. These were the one at the Bluff ; another at Eaton's,

two and a half miles away on the northern bank of the river ; and a smaller one at Freeland's, a mile distant at the west, and near the location selected by Robertson.

The stations erected, the settlers waited in anxious suspense for the coming of their wives and children. The three months allowed for their voyage had expired, but the sound of their approach had not yet broken the stillness of the river solitudes. Had they fallen victims to the prowling savage, or perished of the cold that had slain the deer, the catamount, and even the wild turkeys, with which the woods abounded ? The settlers did not know and could not conjecture ; and for a full month they went silently about, oppressed by harrowing apprehensions. Thus it was till the close of April, when spring had come, unlocking the river, and clothing the woods in an umbrageous beauty that was wonderful. Then, as the sun arose one glorious morning, a solitary four-pounder echoed along the Cumberland, and a few hours thereafter the little fleet of forty scows, canoes, and pirogues came to anchor under the walls of Eaton's Station, amid such rejoicing as never before was known in the wilderness. But all the immigrants had not arrived in safety. Thirty-three had perished by the way, and, of those who escaped, nine were more or less wounded. Among those who had come through were the wife and five children of Robertson ; the mother of the late Hon. Bailie Peyton ; and Donelson, and his son John, and daughter Rachel, who subsequently became the wife of Andrew Jackson.

The voyage has no parallel in modern history. Nearly two thousand miles they had journeyed, in frail boats, upon unknown and dangerous rivers, never before navigated by a white man. The country through which they passed was infested by hostile Indians, and their way had been over foaming whirlpools and dangerous shoals thirty miles in extent, where for days they had run the gantlet and been exposed to the fire of the whole nation of Chickamaugas, the fiercest Indian tribe on this continent. For more than a month they were unable to move because of the intense cold, and one of their number was frozen to death on the passage. Of the other dead, one was drowned, one was burned by the Indians, and the rest fell by the rifle and tomahawk of the savages. The flight of the Tartar tribe across the steppes of Asia, Xenophon's famous anabasis of the Ten Thousand, or Kane's heroic struggle for life in the arctic regions, is not a more thrilling story than the simple narrative of this expedition, which John Donelson has left to his descendants. In it he says the voyage was "intended by God's permission"; clearly not a soul could have come safely through it but by God's special providence.

Thus, amid ice, and snow, and the intense cold of 1780, was planted the first civilized settlement in the valley of the Mississippi, where soon will be the center of American population. The settlers, as I have said, were in the heart of a wide wilderness, and surrounded by hostile savages. They were encroachers upon the

favorite hunting-ground of the Indians, especially valued by them for the abundant game that subsisted on the luxuriant vegetation of the great natural park which stretches from the Cumberland to the Ohio, and is now familiarly known as the "blue-grass region." Moreover, their position was peculiarly exposed to incursions from the savages. It was accessible by water from the most distant tribes. Descending navigation could bring upon it from the Ohio and Mississippi the canoe-fleets of the northern nations; while down the Tellico, the Hiwassee, and the Tennessee could come nearly ten thousand Creeks and Cherokees, and, uniting at the Bluff before the whites had erected their forts and stockades, these Indians, twenty thousand strong, might in one night sweep the settlers from existence. All the savage tribes were now in friendship with one another, and in alliance with Great Britain. They knew every movement of the whites, and their wildest energies and fiercest passions were aroused by this invasion of the red man's Eden, which they justly regarded as the signal for their own expulsion. Why, then, did they not descend upon the settlers and annihilate them before they were in a position to defend themselves?

They intended to have done so. In his stronghold at Detroit, the British Governor, Hamilton, had planned their extermination. "We will make wolf-bait of them," he said; "we will drive every rebel beyond the Alleghanies!" He had concerted for a universal uprising of the savages, and appointed a general gathering of

## 10 ADVANCE-GUARD OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION.

the tribes at the mouth of the Tennessee, whence they were to descend upon the entire border. But George Rogers Clark came upon him at Vincennes, clapped him into irons, and he was now safely lodged in the jail at Williamsburg, Virginia. Thus ingloriously terminated the bloody career of the ruthless British governor.

However, the Indians were not without able leaders, like Oconostota, who had shown great military capacity. They would have made the onslaught, even after the capture of Hamilton, had they not encountered a greater enemy than Robertson, greater even than Sevier, whom they regarded as well-nigh invincible. Sevier had paralyzed the Creeks and Cherokees by the capture of their arms and ammunition at Chickamauga, but the northern tribes had been well provided by Hamilton. They planned to let Sevier alone, and to fall in overpowering numbers upon Robertson. But "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera," and the elements did battle for the handful of adventurous white men shivering there upon the Cumberland. The cold, which set in during December with such severity as to give Robertson anxious thoughts about the absent women and children, destroyed the game, and imprisoned the savages within their wigwams. There, half-clad and altogether starved, they perished by hundreds. It was more than they could do to keep their own souls and bodies together, and they left the settlers unmolested. Thus the one auspicious moment passed away from the sav-

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ages. Thenceforth the faith, and firmness, and heroism of Robertson would suffice to hold that lone outpost in the wilderness. In these events, as they gradually disclosed themselves, Robertson saw the hand of Providence. "God is on our side," he said to his comrades. "We will not fear, for mightier is he that is with us than all who can come against us."

The women and children of the settlers were no sooner domiciled in their rude abodes than Robertson called all the men together to the Bluff to settle upon a form of civil government. They were within the territory of North Carolina, but seven hundred miles from its seat of government, and separated from it by more than three hundred miles of forest, which was without a human inhabitant. Of necessity, therefore, the settlers had to be self-governing, as well as self-defending, and in every way an independent community. Accordingly, a "compact of government" was drawn up, and twelve men were elected to administer it, Robertson being chosen president of the colony. This document was found in 1846 in an old trunk which had belonged to one of the original twelve, and it is now in possession of the Tennessee Historical Society. It is a remarkable paper, so comprehensive, so wise in its provisions, and so exactly adapted to the circumstances of the settlement, that it alone would rank Robertson as an able organizer and statesman. It is dated May 1, 1780, and was signed by two hundred and fifty-six settlers, all but one of whom wrote their names

## 12 ADVANCE-GUARD OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION.

in good, fair English. There is here space for but one of its paragraphs, which is as follows :

“The well-being of this country depends, under divine Providence, on unanimity of sentiment and concurrence in measures ; and as clashing interests and opinions, unless under some restraint, will most certainly produce confusion, discord, and almost certain ruin, so we think it our duty to associate, and hereby form ourselves into one society for the benefit of present and future settlers ; and, until the full and proper exercise of the laws of our country can be in use and the powers of government exerted among us, we do most solemnly and sacredly declare and promise each other that we will faithfully and punctually adhere to, perform, and abide by this our association, and at all times, if need be, compel, by our united force, a due obedience to these our rules and regulations.”

The settlers now went to work to plant their corn and provide themselves with food for the coming season. Trees were felled or girdled, ground was broken up, crops were sown and planted, and soon was heard everywhere the cheerful voice of the husbandman. Game, too, speedily made its appearance ; deer, bear, and buffalo came into the forest, and flocks of wild turkeys at times almost darkened the atmosphere. These last, with the wild rabbit, came so near the dwellings as to be an easy prey to the settler ; and it was seldom that he had not game upon his dinner-table. The larger animals kept at greater distances, and were usually hunted by parties

of from ten to twenty ; for, though the few Delawares who had appeared about the stations had seemed friendly, it was not deemed prudent to venture far from the forts, except in bodies large enough to meet any roving band of Indians. Such expeditions were, however, often undertaken, for the meat of the bear, deer, and buffalo, dried and jerked, made excellent provision for the coming winter. The game was abundant ; but the exploits of some of these hunting-parties read altogether like romance. One is said to have gone some twenty miles up one of the branches of the Cumberland, and to have soon returned with its canoes laden with ninety deer, one hundred and fifty bears, and seventy-five buffaloes. Thus were the larders of the settlers filled to overflowing.

Most civilized men have tasted of venison, but few have feasted upon the flesh of the bear or the buffalo ; and yet we have the word of these pioneers that buffalo-tongue and bear-steak are more delicious viands—of far more delicate flavor and juicy richness—than the haunch of the deer. And bear's oil !—according to them, butter is not to be compared with it, and this, perhaps, shows that the Anglo-Saxon, in a state of nature, is very near of kin to the Esquimau. But much depends upon the cooking, and there were cooks among these people—famous housewives, who could brown a hoe-cake or broil a bear-steak in a manner fit for a ruler. And hoe-cakes were yet to be had among them ; for, owing to the provident forethought of Robertson, who, against their com-



#### 14 ADVANCE-GUARD OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION.

ing, had the previous season planted and harvested a liberal crop of corn, they still had an abundance of that grain, which at that time was so scarce in all the Western settlements as to command one hundred and sixty-five dollars per bushel at Boonesborough.

Thus the settlers abode in peace, abundance, and primitive simplicity, their days given to cheerful toil, their nights to social and intellectual enjoyment, while they gathered around the huge fireplaces of their rude forts, feeling as secure behind their walls of logs as ever baron in his rock-built fortress of the middle ages. On such occasions they would listen to Robertson or some of the older men as they read from a choice book, or discussed the affairs of the settlement, or the unhappy fate of their friends over the mountains, who were still wrestling in a death-grip with the mighty power across the ocean. Or perhaps the fiddler would be among them, and he would strike up some old-fashioned tune which, getting into the legs of the younger people, would set them upon the puncheon floor, to dance away till the stars grew pale in the light of the morning.

But what is that solitary gun sounding so faint and far away in the still evening twilight? The dwellers in the fort pause and listen. "Some one is late in winging his turkey for to-morrow's dinner," is the general opinion; but "No," says Robertson, "A white man does not fire with so light a charge of powder. It is an Indian gun. The rascals are around us!"

The gates were closed, and a sentry was kept all

night on the lookout. But no alarm occurred. A stillness as of death hung over the hills and the adjacent forest. It was the calm which precedes a storm. In the morning the gates were unlocked, and, rifle in hand, a party of thirty went out to scour the undergrowth and canebrakes. They found no trace of savage footsteps around the fort, or within half a mile of it in any direction; but it was not long before a shrill whistle echoed among the trees, and, following the sound, the settlers gathered to one who had struck the trail of a large body of Indians. There was no mistaking the sign—the print of the moccasin, pointing forward straight as a rifle-barrel. The party numbered five hundred—too many for a hunting-party. Should the thirty follow on their trail, or return to the fort, and wait there the coming of the savages? But the Indians were headed north, toward Mansker's, one of the weaker and more remote of the stations. If come upon unawares, its occupants would be butchered without warning. So it was that Robertson in a few moments said, "Forward!"

Silently, with bated breath and muffled footsteps, their ears awake to the slightest sound, and their eyes ranging the matted undergrowth, the little party moved on over the trail of the savages till, at the end of another half-mile, they came suddenly upon a prostrate body. It was that of a young man named Joseph Hay, one of their comrades. He had been scalped and horribly mangled. Silently they gathered round the body, and then in low tones Robertson gave his orders. Two

## 16 ADVANCE-GUARD OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION.

by two, about one half of the party, should set out at once, to warn all people at the outlying stations to come to the Bluff or Eaton's Station, while he and the rest bore the body back to the fort, and gave it suitable burial. This they did, and it was the first interment in the cemetery at Nashville.

Though most of the settlers had been reared upon the border, very few of them had ever seen the remains of one who had been scalped and mutilated by the savages. Sevier's custom of carrying war into the enemy's country had kept such sights of blood away from Watauga; and now a thrill of indignant horror ran through the colony as one after another came to gaze upon the mangled body of the unfortunate youth, who had thus fallen their first victim to savage atrocity. The settlers were aflame with excitement. Rapidly they came in from the outlying stations, and loudly they clamored to be led against the enemy. But Robertson counseled caution and prudence. Behind the walls of the forts they were in absolute security, but a disaster in the open field might endanger the whole settlement; and they did not know the strength of the enemy. He was as much aroused as the others, but he never allowed passion to override reason. He counseled them to watch and wait; but, should occasion require, he would move with celerity and destruction.

The Indians made no general attack on any of the forts. Their tactics were to surround the stations, cut off such individuals and small parties as ventured be-

yond rifle-shot of the stockades, and to capture and drive off the cattle and horses of the settlers. These animals were indispensable to the whites. Without horses the men could not plow the land or harvest their crops; and without milk the women could not enjoy their spruce-gum tea, or indulge once a week in the supreme luxury of a bowl of coffee. One cloudy night a large body of savages descended upon the Bluff, and drove off every one of the horses. So little noise was made, that the sentinels at the fort did not hear a footfall—merely a slight commotion among the animals of which they thought nothing. The loss was not discovered until morning. Then, taking only Andrew Buchanan and eighteen others—lest he should too much weaken the garrison—Robertson followed on the trail of the marauders. Forty miles he went through the pathless forest, alive with enemies, and at last overtook the band, numbering a hundred and more, as they were going into camp on the bank of Duck River. “Give them one fire,” he said to his men, “then club your rifles, and down upon them!” Taken by surprise, the Indians made no resistance. A dozen were shot as they fled; the others scattered to the four winds, leaving their own and the settlers’ horses behind them.

The Indians continued these depredations, and it became a matter of dispute among the captains who should head a pursuit; for each one was eager to go, and all insisted that Robertson’s life was of too much value to be hazarded on such expeditions. Buchanan

## 18 ADVANCE-GUARD OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION.

was the first to lead another party, and then Lapier; and both returned successfully. The latter was a man of reckless courage, rollicking humor, and so rhythmical an ear that he acquired the title of the poet of the backwoods. On this occasion he claimed to have killed a prominent chieftain.

"The red-skin imp,  
I made him limp,"

was what he said, as he recounted the incidents of the expedition on the occasion of his wedding at the fort, a few days afterward. For there was "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage" even during the bloody carnival that was then going on along the Cumberland.

This was the first wedding in Nashville, and, as no clergyman had yet come into the settlement, Robertson officiated at the ceremony. It was a joyous time, and unique in its primitive simplicity. An old chronicle says of it: "There was pretty much of a feast at this wedding, and a most cheerful company. They had no wine or ardent spirits; they had no wheat or corn-bread, no cakes, no confectionaries; but they had any quantity of fresh and dried meat, buffalo-tongue, bear-meat, venison-saddle, and venison-ham, broiled, stewed, fried, and jerked, and, as a great delicacy for the ladies, some roasting-ears, or ears of green corn roasted, or boiled, or made into succotash."

Meanwhile the bloody work went on, but I need not



recount its incidents. It is enough to say that, out of those two hundred and sixty-six men, thirty-nine, one by one, in the short period of sixty days, perished. In fact, during the entire year only one of the settlers died a death natural to humanity. But what strikes us with most wonder is that, in the midst of this human holocaust, there was light-hearted gayety throughout the settlements. These men seem to have been insensible to fear, and to have delighted in danger. With ready alacrity, and at desperate odds, they rushed into battle with the savages. Steady and undaunted in defense, they were impetuous and irresistible in attack. With the "Tennessee yell" they had learned of Sevier, they would swoop like a whirlwind upon the enemy, never asking or expecting quarter. It was always a life-and-death struggle. Never did one submit to be captured. Not a solitary case of cowardice is reported; but there are numberless instances of individual bravery, of disinterested friendship, and self-sacrificing devotion, that will compare with the most heroic achievements in history. In the most perilous crises there were always bold spirits ready to break the cordon of savage fire, to secure food for a hungry garrison. And the heroism of the men infected the women and children, and even the negro servants, as was instanced when Somerset, a slave of Colonel Donelson, swam the swollen Cumberland, and ran the gantlet of a hundred Indian rifles, to bring rescue to his young master, who had been surprised and surrounded at Clover Bottom.

## 20 ADVANCE-GUARD OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION.

But a foe more to be dreaded than the Indians was soon upon the settlers. It was starvation—a lingering death behind the walls of their log-fortresses. An unprecedented freshet came in the Cumberland, almost converting the Bluff into an island, and submerging and destroying all the crops along the river. The grain around the inland stations had been left to waste when they were deserted by the settlers, and now it was certain death for any party, however strong, to venture out on a hunting expedition. Added to this, their supply of powder was well-nigh exhausted. In these circumstances the stoutest-hearted began to quail, and, on one pretext or another, to slip away from the settlements. They could face the savages, but not this foe with hollow eye, and gaunt frame, and sallow visage. Out of the two hundred and seventeen who had been left by the tomahawk of the Indians, only one hundred and thirty-four answered to the roll-call at the three stations in November, 1780. Even Donelson and Rains abandoned their posts, though only for a time, to convey their families to a place of safety in the older settlements. That done, they returned, and again cast in their lot with their comrades.

It was a time of anxious thought and gloomy foreboding when the remaining settlers came together to the Bluff to decide whether they should abandon the post or stand their ground against the many perils by which they were environed. The boldest among them were wavering and disheartened, and all eyes were turned

upon their leader, when with stern faces they gathered around him in their log-fortress. Then it is reported that he arose, and, slowly and deliberately, like one who weighed his every word, and knew that life or death hung upon his sentences, he addressed them. He admitted that their numbers were few, their defenses weak, their ammunition well-nigh spent, their provisions all but exhausted, and they were encompassed by savage enemies, who only delayed attack till starvation should so enfeeble them that they would be an easy prey to overwhelming numbers; but, he added, in a tone of inflexible resolution, "My station is here, and here I shall stay if every one of you deserts me!"

The spirit that spoke through the man gave new heart to his desponding comrades. With one accord they all declared they would remain, and meet with him whatever was before them. Then Robertson volunteered to himself break through the Indian lines into Kentucky to secure the much-needed ammunition. One of his own sons, Isaac Bledsoe, his trusted friend, and a faithful negro servant, accompanied him. Thus, as once before on the Watauga, did Robertson cast himself into the breach to save his fellow-settlers.

At once the four set out on the perilous expedition. It was a trip of a couple of months through a trackless forest. If they succeeded in passing the Indian lines, they could scarcely hope their trail would escape the notice of the savages. Without doubt they would be followed; and they might be overtaken and waylaid by



overwhelming numbers. This was the prospect before Robertson. Behind him he was leaving a wife, soon to become a mother, and exposed to innumerable dangers. He might perish by the way, or he might return to find her slaughtered by the savages. Truly these were times that "tried men's souls," and it was well for Western civilization that there were here heroic souls equal to such ordeals.

The little party passed the Indian lines in safety, and in due time arrived at Harrod's Station, now Harrodsburg, Kentucky. Here they received the first tidings in many months of the war upon the seaboard. King's Mountain had been fought, and Cornwallis was fleeing toward Charleston. "Both Robertson and I," said Bledsoe, "were a foot taller when we heard of the glorious work of Sevier and Shelby. 'If they can so handle the British and Tories,' we said to one another, 'can we not whip the Indians in the backwoods?'"

At Harrod's they could obtain no ammunition, so they pushed on without delay to Boonesborough. Boone was an old friend of Robertson, and he cheerfully divided with him his stock of powder and lead; but his supply was scanty, and not enough to last the Cumberland settlers through the winter. Bledsoe, therefore, set out at once for Watauga, where he hoped to obtain full supplies from Sevier; and if not there of him, then of Colonel Preston, on the head-waters of the Holston, in Virginia. At Boone's Robertson met George Rogers Clark, and the result of their interview was of quite as much

importance to the settlers as the fresh supply of ammunition.

Robertson had for some time known that the Indians by whom the Cumberland settlements were beleaguered, were not his old enemies the Creeks and Cherokees, but the Choctaws and Chickasaws. They had been provoked to hostilities in consequence of the erection by Clark of Fort Jefferson on their territory, about twenty miles below the mouth of the Ohio ; and now Clark consented to abandon this fort, if thereby he could aid Robertson in making peace with the Chickasaws. This much accomplished, Robertson set out with his son, his faithful servant, and a pack-horse laden with ammunition, on his homeward journey. His way, through the open prairies of Kentucky and the canebrakes of Tennessee, was again attended with constant peril. He crossed frequently the trails of the Indians, and on several occasions came upon their half-extinguished camp-fires ; but he encountered none of the savages. His going and coming had thus been in entire safety ; and this he always spoke of as most remarkable, and due altogether to the watchful care of an overruling Providence.

He was ferried over the river to the Bluff shortly after noon on the 15th of January, 1781, and, seeing his approach, every occupant of the fort came out to meet him. Old and young lined the river's bank, and gave him a welcome such as seldom has been accorded to any of the most famous heroes in history. Robertson was their deliverer, the Moses who was leading them

through the wilderness, and now for the first time he realized the strong hold he had on the affections of every man, woman, and child in the settlement. Apparently stolid, he had a most sensitive nature, and this demonstration touched him deeply. It was, he afterward said, compensation for all the hardship and danger he had encountered.

His wife and children were a mile away at Freeland's Station ; and, leaving his pack-animal at the Bluff, he soon remounted his horse, and rode off through the woods to meet them. Here again the news of his arrival had preceded him, and he was joyfully greeted by Major Lucas and the families of the ten settlers who had their homes in the station. While they plied him with questions, he allowed "his powder-horn to be passed around, as generous lovers of maccaboy are pleased to see their snuff-boxes serve the company" ; and he also suffered his shot-pouch to be nearly emptied in a like manner. These things were of priceless value to the garrison. Before his arrival there was not a single bullet or an ounce of powder at this station.

Robertson's wife lay on a rude bed in an inner chamber, and by her side was a boy four days old—the first white child born at Nashville. It is not many years since he died, a venerable and venerated patriarch, the sole survivor of those dark days upon the Cumberland.

From Major Lucas and the others Robertson learned how it had fared with the settlers in his absence. They had been wonderfully guarded. Lucas had kept the

scout Castleman and a few others out as spies, and from time to time they had reported Indians about, but on no occasion had the savages come dangerously near the stations. The cattle, too, had been unmolested, and the supply of cane which had been laid in had kept them in reasonably good condition. Food had been scanty, but the settlers had eked out their supplies with the chestnuts and white and black walnuts that grew in abundance about the stations, and on such game as could be caught near by with their rude traps and dead-falls. Not an ounce of powder had been expended. Their small stock had been carefully hoarded at the Bluff against an assault from the Indians. They had been in constant apprehension of attack, but the winter had not been without the usual enjoyments. The people had gathered together of evenings as was their custom, the song and the dance had gone round, and there had been a cracking of jokes as well as a cracking of walnuts. Their great and constant anxiety had been for Robertson, and, now that he was safe, and they had once more a plentiful supply of powder, let the red-skins come on! They would meet a bloody welcome.

Then the settlers plied Robertson for news from the seaboard, and he told them of Sevier, and Shelby, and Campbell, and Cleveland; how they had bagged the British at King's Mountain, and sent Cornwallis to the right about southward. Nearly all of them had fought under Sevier, and now they longed to be again in the thick of the fight, sharing the danger and glory of their

old commander. Lucas had been one of Sevier's captains, and a member of the first government at Watauga. He had been with Sevier on many a hard-fought field, but now, in a few short hours, he was to fall ingloriously from an Indian bullet.

The evening wore away in pleasant conversation, and it was late at night when the settlers separated to their several cabins. There were seven or eight of them in the station, surrounded by a palisade of pointed logs set upright, and furnished with bastions to render more effective the fire of the small force of defenders. The entrance to the stockade was closed by a stout gate, fastened on the inside by a heavy chain. No sentry was on duty, for no danger was apprehended. The scouts who had come in at nightfall had seen no signs of Indians in the vicinity.

All had gone to their beds except Robertson, who sat by a smoldering fire in the room where his wife and young child were sleeping. He was immersed in thought, and unconsciously stirring the embers; but all his senses were alert, and rendered keener than usual by his recent experiences in the forest. Suddenly, about midnight, he heard a slight movement of the chain at the gateway. Springing to his feet, and looking through a port-hole, he saw in the clear moonlight a hundred savages pouring into the inclosure. He seized his rifle, took deliberate aim, and their leader fell, mortally wounded. Then, as he reloaded, he shouted, "Indians!" Aroused by the shout and the firing, every



man in the fort was instantly upon his feet and prepared for the encounter. As Robertson fired a second time, the others poured in a volley; and then the Indians raised the terrific war-whoop, and discharged their rifles upon the cabins. For a few moments it rained bullets. The cabin occupied by Major Lucas and Robertson's servant had been but recently constructed, and the chinks between the logs were not yet filled, as was customary. Seeing this, the savages opened upon it a hot fire, and Lucas rashly rushed out to secure better shelter. He was shot down as he opened the door, and the faithful negro, too, who had accompanied Robertson on his perilous journey, was riddled with bullets. In a loud voice Robertson animated the men and directed the firing, charging them to take deliberate aim, and to keep from before the port-holes when loading. The din awoke the garrison at the Bluff, and soon the solitary swivel at the fort announced to the besieged that succor was coming. Hearing this, and finding it impossible to force the strong log-houses, the Indians withdrew to the outside of the stockade, and there wasted their powder upon the empty cabin from which Lucas had so rashly issued. In the morning not less than five hundred bullets were dug from its walls and embrasures. The besieged fired only six rounds to a man, for want of ammunition; but though, after their custom, the Indians bore away their dead, the numerous trails of blood showed that the opportune supply of powder and lead had done terrible execution. It is easy to conceive what

would have been the fate of the settlers at this station had not Robertson arrived just when he did with his pouch well filled with shot and powder. In the history of these people are numerous occasions when they were saved from destruction by some such fortunate and unlooked-for circumstance.

This was Robertson's last fight with the Chickasaws. By some means, not recorded, he obtained a personal interview with Piomingo, their head chieftain, and succeeded not only in making peace with him, but in detaching both the Chickasaws and Choctaws from their alliance with Great Britain. This chief was a noble character, and a friendship then sprang up between him and Robertson that lasted through their lives, and was of essential service to the settlers in their subsequent warfare with the Creeks and Cherokees.

At peace with the Indians, the settlers now looked forward to planting their crops in security. They no longer feared to venture into the forest, and, with their guns again loaded, they soon had an abundance of game upon their tables ; and, when Spring came, they prepared to plant their corn, in full assurance of a peaceful harvest.

## CHAPTER II.

### A RAIN OF FIRE.

THE leader of this advance-guard of Western civilization was a man who, so far as I know, has had no exact counterpart in American history. He was Miles Standish, without his Puritanism—John Brown, without his fanaticism. He “walked by faith and not by sight”; and yet he was possessed of the strongest worldly wisdom—viewing facts without any glamour of the imagination; but, nevertheless, undertaking and achieving projects which to cool reason would seem absolutely chimerical.

At the date at which this history opens he was thirty-eight years of age, having been born in Brunswick County, Virginia, in 1742. He was of Scotch-Irish parentage, and had inherited the sturdy qualities, together with the rigid Presbyterianism, of his ancestors. His father was of the yeoman class—cultivating with his own hands a small homestead—and Robertson himself had been brought up to the severest manual labor, with little time or opportunity to acquire more than a very meager book education. His biographer, Putnam, states that



he was taught to read by his wife ; but this is denied by his descendants. However, it is certain that he knew little of any books except the Bible, and the few religious works which in that day were in wide circulation in the colonies. But, if he had imbibed few of other men's thoughts, he had been closely attentive to his own. He was possessed of the keenest observation, the coolest, most dispassionate judgment, and a certain rectitude of mind which enabled him to see things in their right relations ; and whatever he had of mental equipment was genuine, and altogether unborrowed. What he did know, he knew beyond all cavil or peradventure ; and the man who does so is always a strong character. From his youth up he had been in the habit of steady and patient reflection ; and hence he had acquired a larger stock of ideas than many men of much wider knowledge. His mind was broad and comprehensive, and yet it revolved in a narrow sphere—acting, however, in that sphere with peculiar power and intensity. To the casual observer his prominent trait would appear to be strong, practical common sense ; but there can be no question that it was in reality faith—unquestioning reliance on an overruling Power, who had, he thought, selected him to be the forerunner of Western civilization. To this conviction he had come when, ten years before, his life had been saved in a most singular manner, as I have elsewhere related ;\* and he expressed it to Sevier

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\* "The Rear-Guard of the Revolution," pp. 47, 48.

when he attempted to dissuade him from this last perilous plunge into a far-off wilderness. "We are," he said to him, "the advance-guard of civilization, and our way is across the continent." Remarkable words to have been spoken a hundred years ago, by a man hemmed in by uncounted enemies, and when the Mississippi River, and all the vast region beyond, were in the hands of a hostile power. This phrase, and another—"Man proposes, but God disposes"—which was ever on his lips, afford, I think, a key to the character of Robinson. Nothing but such a faith could have enabled him to so cheerfully meet the hardships, privations, and perils which he encountered in planting civilization at that remote outpost on the Cumberland. He counted consequences, and when possible avoided danger; but, when peril had to be met, he stood absolutely undismayed, alike by the cold that destroyed the settler's game, the floods which swept away his crops, and the savage horde who encircled his home and smote him down whenever he ventured beyond the gateway of his log station.

But, though in Robertson's character there was not a trace of cant or fanaticism, there was blended with his faith a trifle of superstition; and I think it is so with most men who like him live very near to Nature. They may believe in the reign of law—that it governs alike in the natural and the spiritual world—but they not only *see* God in Nature, they sensibly *feel* the underlying and overruling Mind that moves the pulses of creation.

Hence, they often attribute to things which have the simplest natural origin a special significance, as if they were a direct utterance of the Deity. It was so with the ancients who saw in "the bow in the clouds" an express token of the Infinite Mercy, while we know that the natural refraction of light hung it there ages before man was here to hope, and to fear, and to act his little part in the great drama of the universe. Robertson recognized a benevolent Overruler, who "providently caters for the sparrow"; but he believed that Providence brings about its special ends in the intelligent universe by natural means—by acting on our minds, and enlightening them to a right use of men, events, and natural elements. And yet he was not enough of "a scientist" to draw a precise line between the natural and the supernatural—between those phenomena whose laws we know, and those whose laws we do not know. To him all things that exist are natural, and Nature as directly moved by the indwelling Divine will as is the human body by the indwelling human will. So it was that, when he awoke one morning during the spring following the attack on Freeland's Station, and beheld the earth draped in a sleeted glory almost too dazzling to look upon, he felt that God was visibly present, and that he had clad all Nature in insufferable splendor expressly to assure him and his compatriots that his power was everywhere—even over his sore-distressed children pent up there in those distant solitudes.

It was a spectacle such as civilized man has seldom

seen, and never except in a wide forest. The whole earth was bedecked with diamonds. The mighty oaks east of the river, the dense cedars at the west, the encircling hills at the south—all were one mass of glittering radiance. The tallest trees were bowed by its weight, the slenderest twigs sparkled in its glory. The vines which festooned the tangled forest, swayed by the wind, dropped a spray of brilliants. Every sprig, every leaf, every branch, shone with dazzling flames, and the central hill was crowned with a diadem of jewels, such as never king counted among his treasures. The world of stars seemed fallen upon the earth, and trembling, blazing, flashing there in coruscant light. It was a living flame, a luminous flood, a heaving ocean of luster and loveliness, in which the everlasting beauty was mirrored in such a glory as “never yet was on land or sea.” Well might Robertson say to his beleaguered companions, “Come, and see the works of God—his wonders on the earth! Will he who clothes dead Nature in such a glory, forget us, his living children?”

But all this glory vanished with the setting sun. A south wind blew, a storm-cloud gathered, a beating rain came down, and the splendor of the morning was lost in the gloom of a night that was dark, and drear, and desolate. So was it in the lives of the settlers. The transient gleam of hope which they saw in this grand natural phenomenon was soon obscured in a storm of war, in which nearly one half of them were smitten

with death, and the life of Robertson himself was saved only as it were by miracle.

The storm broke in the following April. The settlers had begun to plough their land, and were looking forward to a peaceful harvest, when the scouts came in with reports of "Indians." Only small parties had been seen, and they seemed to be engaged in hunting; but it was soon discovered that they were Cherokees, and this led Robertson to enjoin upon his comrades more than ordinary caution. He himself was stationed at the Bluff, where the fort at this time was manned by only thirty-five men, the rest being divided between the two other fortified stations. All these forts were modeled after the one built by Sevier at Watanga. This one consisted of a log-house of two stories, with bastions and port-holes; adjoining which were a dozen other log-cabins, the whole inclosed with stout palisades. Over the wide gateway was a lookout station, whence a view could be had of the country for many miles around. The buildings were on elevated ground, and below them were bottom-lands covered with cane, and at the north-west was a dense growth of privet-bushes.

A sentry was posted on the lookout station nightly, but often others came out during his watch to see that he was properly vigilant. Thus it was that about one o'clock, on the morning of the 2d of April, Jonas Menifee clambered to the roof of a block-house, and detected an Indian spying around the buildings. He leveled his rifle and fired at the savage, who disap-



peared among the privet-bushes ; but between dawn and daylight three others came within range of the fort and fired at the man on the lookout station. Then they leisurely reloaded their guns, as if to defy the garrison. Every soul in the fort was by this time aroused, and, though they felt sure the Indians were merely the advance of a larger body, they determined to pursue them, as had been customary on like occasions.

A party of twenty-one, including Robertson, mounted their horses and charged down the hill upon the Indians. When they had arrived near the privet-bushes, about three hundred savages arose from ambush in their front and poured a volley upon them. The whites dismounted to give battle, when they heard a war-whoop in their rear, and saw a still larger body of Indians rise from ambush and glide between them and the fort. Thus were the twenty-one surrounded by not less than seven hundred ! Fortunately, the horses of the whites, terrified at the firing, had broken away and galloped off toward the hill on which now stands the Capitol ; and some of the Indians, in their eagerness to capture the animals, had set off in pursuit, thus leaving a gap in the line which inclosed the settlers. Through this opening the whites fled, bearing off their wounded. The Indians soon saw their mistake, and began to close down again upon the little party of settlers. The destruction of the whole seemed inevitable, when a fortunate occurrence saved them.

The remainder of the slender garrison stood at the

port-holes ; but the women of the fort, gun or axe in hand, had gathered about the gateway, where also were crowded the dogs of the settlers—fifty large, ferocious animals, trained to hunt wild beasts and Indians, and now aroused to fury by the shouts and sounds of the outside conflict. The wife of Robertson had mounted to the lookout station, and stood there, rifle in hand, intently watching the rapid events on which hung the life of her husband. She saw the stampede of the horses ; the break in the Indian line ; the wild flight of the whites ; and then the swift closing down upon them of their savage assailants. Never did woman experience a more intense straining of her heart-strings ; but even in this terrible moment this brave woman did not lose her self-possession. “Open the gates !” she cried to the sentry below—“open the gates, and set the dogs upon them !” Instantly the order was obeyed, and the ferocious animals flew at the nearest body of Indians with—says the old chronicle—“a persistence and fury never before witnessed.” In self-defense the Indians were obliged to halt and draw their tomahawks upon the infuriated animals. This allowed the whites to escape to the fort—thirteen of them ; the other eight were stretched upon the ground, never as living men to enter it again. The wife of Robertson stood at the gateway as, one after another, the fugitives arrived at the entrance. As her husband came in, begrimed with smoke and powder, she is reported to have said to him, “Thanks be to God, who gave to the Indians a dread of dogs, and a love for horses !”

Among the eight who fell were those brave spirits, Leiper and Buchanan. Isaac Lucas, a brother of the slaughtered major, was shot down within rifle-range of the fort. A stalwart savage was in close pursuit, and as Lucas fell the Indian drew his tomahawk to dispatch him; but the fallen man, who had reloaded his rifle as he ran, now leveled the weapon, and the savage fell dead in his tracks. His comrades in the fort then covered Lucas with their fire, and, after a while, got him away in safety. Even a narrower escape was that of Edward Swanson. Overtaken by a huge savage when within twenty paces of the gateway, and felled to his knees, he grasped the rifle which the Indian had uplifted to brain him. A desperate struggle ensued for the possession of the weapon, during which the garrison could not fire, for fear of killing their comrade. The Indian was the stronger of the two, and he was disengaging his tomahawk to give Swanson his death-blow, when the aged John Buchanan, whose own son lay dead on the field not far away, rushed from the fort and gave the savage a mortal shot from his rifle. The arm of the Indian fell; and then, gritting his teeth with rage, he staggered to a stump near by, and sank dead to the ground. The old man then helped his badly wounded comrade into the fort. Very few of the horses were captured by the Indians; the most of them, after a hard chase over and around Capitol Hill, came to the gateway of the fort and were joyfully admitted.

About ten o'clock in the morning the Indians with-



drew from the neighborhood, but at nightfall they returned and opened fire upon the walls of the fort. They seemed more numerous than before, and it was conjectured that they had been re-enforced by a party not in the conflict of the morning. About midnight a body of several hundred were seen to gather near to the walls of the fort, and then the solitary swivel of the settlers was put in position, loaded with slugs and broken crockery, and discharged upon the gathering mass, who at once scattered and fled into the forest. This explosion of worthless material doubtless saved the fort from being stormed by a thousand Indians. With the report of the rifle the savages were familiar, but there was terror to them in the roar of even a four-pounder.

Then, again, the whole settlement became a battleground, where white man met red, and both went down to a swift destruction. Of those one hundred and thirty-four, who so bravely stood at their posts, at the end of the year only seventy were living. The rest had offered up their lives for Western civilization. Every man was a hero, every boy was a man, and every delicate woman was a soldier, ready to mold bullets, to load rifles, to stand all day gun in hand at the port-holes, and to watch all night to extinguish the torch which the prowling savage might apply to the stations.

Robertson was not long in discovering that the attacking party had been composed not only of Cherokees, but of detachments from the Shawnees, Delawares, Wyandots, and even the Pottawattamies, and other tribes

around the Great Lakes of the Northwest. Hence he inferred that a vast coalition had been formed for the destruction of the white settlers. In this he was not mistaken. The British Governor of Detroit, Hamilton—styled the “scalp-trader” by George Rogers Clark—who had been the prime mover of the previous coalition, was now safely under lock and key in Virginia, but the dragon’s teeth he had sown had, after more than a year, sprung up a well-armed force of twenty thousand. Deputies from all the tribes except the Choctaws and Chickasaws had recently met at Old Chillicothe, and there, inflamed by the evil eloquence of Simon Girty, the renegade white devil, they had resolved on the extermination of all the settlers west of the Alleghanies. The head chief of the Shawnees was to direct the operations in the field, but the feeble and decrepit Oconostota was the heart and brain of the movement. The diabolical spirit which was in this old man could only be appeased by the rapine and slaughter of the whites; but he was now smarting under the recent chastisement of his nation by Sevier, who, at that very moment, was carrying fire and sword to the Cherokee towns among the Smoky Mountains. His braves were too much cowed to be at once led against the invincible Nolichucky Jack, but they had no such fear of the peace-loving Robertson and his feeble settlements along the Cumberland. Hence, while Girty descended upon the whites in Kentucky, Oconostota determined that his warriors and their allies should envelop and destroy Robertson, the man of

whose fire-water he had drunk, whose venison he had eaten, and for whom he had professed an undying friendship.

Oconostota had given the whites timely warning of his lasting enmity. At the treaty of Watauga in 1776 he had opposed the cession of the country to the whites ; and, when his arguments had been overborne by those who represented that the settlers would be a barrier between the Cherokees and their Northern enemies, he had taken David Boone by the hand and said to him : "Young man, we have sold you a fine territory, but I fear you will have some difficulty in getting it settled." In this remark of the wily old savage there was a threat as well as a prophecy. "Much trouble," indeed, was to make this fine land a "dark and bloody ground." Instead of being a barrier between contending savages, it was to be their central point of attack, the target at which through long years they should aim their most murderous fire.

The fact of the coalition Robertson subsequently learned from the Chickasaws, but the evidence he now had of it was too clear to be questioned ; so, he prepared at once, as best he might, for the direful emergency. But what could he do ? What more than to look well to the strengthening of the forts, and to lay in a plentiful supply of ammunition ? Reduced to extremities, the settlers could trap game in their dead-falls, gather walnuts from the near-by forest, or catch fish from the river which the fort overlooked ; but without powder and lead

they would be absolutely at the mercy of the savages. Bledsoe had brought in a pack-load during the winter, but not enough to last through the year ; so now the scout Castleman, and one other, set out to break through the Indian lines and procure the needed supply from the distant settlements. But even with ammunition, and posted behind stout defenses, how could this handful of men withstand such a horde of enemies ? Does history give account of any similar body so much as attempting to stand its ground against such overwhelming numbers ?

The Indians made no further attack on any of the forts ; they simply enveloped them, and lay in wait to take the whites at a disadvantage. There was no longer any security outside the walls of the log-fortresses ; and even there the momentary exposure of a head at an embrasure was very sure to draw upon it an Indian bullet. Corn had to be raised against the coming winter ; but, while one planted, two or three stood guard with their rifles at half-trigger. If one went to a spring, another was placed on watch ; and if half a dozen were, for any purpose, gathered in field or forest, each one stood, gun in hand, facing outward, his senses all alert for the prowling savage. The ground around the stations became a wide battle-field, or rather, a vast aceldama, where white man and red went down together, leaving their flesh as food for the wolves, and their bones to bleach in the sun and rain, because no man durst give them burial.

Familiarity with danger is said to rob it of its terrors ; but I suppose that a life-long exposure to it would not make a brave man of a coward. Those qualities which coolly meet peril, patiently endure suffering, and resolutely encounter hardship, are born in a man, and are not acquired by any amount of training or experience. With these people, however, they were not only inborn, but also developed by daily danger to a degree that is absolutely wonderful. Their moral courage is shown in the stand they made—one hundred and thirty-four against twenty thousand ; but their natural bravery, their fortitude, their mere physical endurance, were just as remarkable. These characteristics may be illustrated by a few instances as well as by a detailed history.

Two young lads—aged twelve and fourteen—named Mason, went out one morning on a “still-hunt” for deer, to a spring not far from one of the forts. With their rifles loaded, they had concealed themselves in the underbrush, and were silently waiting for the game, when a party of seven Cherokees came to the lick, armed and painted, as if on the war-path. But, painted or unpainted, it mattered not to the boys ; for they had but recently lost an older brother, shot down within sight of the station by these same Cherokees. The smoke from their rifles would show where they were concealed, but, without a thought of the danger, the boys fired, and killed two of the Indians. The rest fled, and then the lads, taught ferocity by their ferocious enemies,



coolly scalped the lifeless bodies and bore the trophies off to the fort.

David Hood was a light-hearted young fellow, quick at repartee and fond of adventure. He was of slender build and without physical strength, but his courage was unquestioned, though no one suspected him of a fortitude absolutely stoical, and a tenacity of life that has seldom been equaled. His brother had been killed by the Indians just outside the fort, during the previous summer; and he had been often cautioned to be more careful in venturing between the stations, but he persisted in going out upon short hunts, and frequent visits to the young people in the neighboring stations. One day in midwinter he went, with two other young men, upon a short excursion; and on their return, about nightfall, they were waylaid and shot at by a considerable body of Indians. They all ran for dear life, but they could not outrun the bullets of the savages. All three were wounded, and Hood so badly that he fell in his tracks, within sight of the fort. The Indians were close upon him, and, deeming it his only chance for life, he turned over upon his face in the cane and feigned to be dead. "The Indians gathered around him," says Captain Rains, in the old chronicle, "and one of them very deliberately twisted his fingers into his hair to scalp him. His knife being very dull he let go, took a better hold, and sawed away until he could pull it off, poor Hood bearing it meanwhile without a groan or a show of life." Then the Indians reloaded their rifles and went away, one of

them giving the dead man a few thrusts with his knife to make sure that life had left him. When they had been some time gone, Hood raised his head, looked about him, and, the coast seeming to be clear, he pulled himself to his feet and set out to hobble toward the fort. But what was his consternation, when, slowly mounting the ridge, to find himself in the midst of the same band of Indians! They set up a fiendish laugh—jeering at him as a dead man, blind and bloody, attempting to walk—and then fired upon him again. He set out to run, but a bullet in the breast brought him to the ground, and again the savages were upon him. On this occasion they gave him wounds that would have killed any one with less than nine lives, and then tossed his body upon a brush-heap in the snow. There he lay through the long hours of a winter's night, within sight of the fort, the garrison supposing him to be dead, and none daring to bring in his body on account of the Indians. In the morning the body was found by the blood-marks in the snow, and taking it sorrowfully up his comrades bore it to the fort, and to one of the outer cabins, to be got ready for interment. The women then gathered about it to do the last offices to the dead, and one of them thought she saw some signs of life in the body. As the warmth of the room diffused itself through his benumbed and half-frozen limbs, Hood's many wounds had started to bleed afresh, and a cloudy consciousness had come back to him. "Aren't you dead?" asked the woman. "No," he answered, in a feeble voice; "I can live, if

you give me only half a chance." He recovered, to often tell how he had *hoodwinked* the Indians.

By a little girl in the fort, who had an experience somewhat similar to his own, he was styled Mr. Opossum, and he was accustomed to retort by calling her Miss Opossum. She had been sent to the spring one day to bring to her mother a bucket of water. Some Indians concealed behind a pile of brush near by seized her, and one drew his knife to cut off her scalp. The screams of the child brought her mother from the fort, followed by a number of the garrison. The Indians fled, but not till they had scalped the child, and given the mother some terrible wounds, from which she was long in recovering. Of old and young who had been scalped, and left for dead, but who had finally recovered, there was soon a number among the settlers. Hood was accustomed to allude to them as his "select company"—his troop of "discrowned royalties."

Captain Rains and the scout Castleman were in the fort when the little girl was scalped, and they resolved upon an immediate pursuit of the Indians. Through the canebrakes, or over the matted leaves that everywhere covered the forest, the trail of a man was as easily followed as footprints are in the snow, and it was not long before the two intrepid men returned to the fort with the scalps of the little girl and of two of the marauders.

These scouts and their companions, whose names have not come down to us, were essential to the very ex-



istence of the beleaguered community. It is impossible to conjecture how Robertson, with all his caution, foresight, and indomitable resolution, could have kept the settlement alive but for their watchful care and sleepless vigilance. At all hours of the day and night they were out, exposed to the extremest dangers. Their duties were to traverse the forest on all sides of the stations, to follow the trails of the savages, waylay the crossings of creeks and rivers, conceal themselves in the neighborhood of springs to which the Indians resorted for water, and to fire upon them whenever it would not be a waste of powder. There were six of them in constant service, to whom—as they could do nothing for their own subsistence—was given an allowance of seventy-five bushels of corn per month. They had to be not only of the highest courage, but of that keenness of vision, quickness of hearing, and skill in wood-craft, which is deemed peculiar to the Indian. But the wood-craft of these men equaled that of the savage, and Castleman excelled him on his own ground, and beat him with his own weapons. He could tread on a dry leaf and make no sound; track the footsteps of an enemy in the darkest night, and find his way through the forest with neither moon nor stars to guide him. The voice of every beast and bird he could imitate—the bleat of the deer, the howl of the wolf, the call of the wild turkey—and all so perfectly as to deceive the very savages. By these sounds, mistaken for those of game, he lured his enemy within reach of his rifle; and then it was a sharp report, a shrill cry,

and another Indian had entered the happy hunting-grounds. Two of his brothers had been killed by the Cherokees, and he felt that he had a special "call" to exterminate that nation. His rifle he loved as if it had been his sweetheart; and he gave it a pet name, as did most of the settlers to their weapons. Rains christened his "Sister," but Castleman gave his the homelier name of "Betsy"; and wonderful were Betsy's exploits, as he related them, for he had the true Southwestern talent at exaggeration. "Once," he is reported to have said, "she girdled a white oak, nicked the epidermis of an Indian's back, knocked over a catamount, brought down a flock of turkeys from the tree-tops, laid out a buffalo, blazed a section of land, split enough boards to cover a shanty; and, if I fired her more than once, you may say I wasted time and ammunition."

But Castleman's own exploits are more credible than those of his rifle, and I quote one of them, as it illustrates the wood-craft that was practiced by both the settlers and the Indians. One of the savages had tried to draw him within reach of his gun by whooping like an owl. "It was," said Castleman, "in the dusk of the evening. The imitation of this large bird of night was very perfect; yet I was suspicious. The woo-hoo call and the woo-hoo answer were not well timed and toned, and the babel chatter was a failure; and, more than this, I was sure they were on the ground. 'That won't begin to do; I'll see you,' says I to myself. As I approached, I saw something, of the height of a stump,

standing between a forked tree which divided near the ground. I knew there could be no stump there, so I put Betsy to my face—that stump was once a live Indian, and he lay at the roots of those forked chestnuts. If he was ever buried, it was not far off.”

Old Mr. Mansker, of Mansker's Station, was also a noted scout, and of him the following is related. He had peculiarly keen eyes, set so widely apart in his head that he was accustomed to say that he could see on both sides and entirely around himself. An Indian had attempted to decoy him by the simulated call of the wild turkey, and the old gentleman thought that “two could play at that game”; though his was the most dangerous part, he being a moving object, while his adversary was stationary. He approached cautiously till he could designate the tree behind which his enemy was concealed. The task then was to make the Indian uncover; so, keeping one eye upon that tree, and the muzzle of his rifle pointed toward it, he crept cautiously along at a distance too great for an Indian's fire, but just right for his “Nancy.” When he was sure the Indian had seen him, he moved away to the right, hoping to draw him on to follow, and so to get him from his concealment. But all the while he kept his left eye fixed upon the tree behind which the savage was hidden. Suddenly the Indian bounded to another cover, and as suddenly Nancy spoke to him in so loud a tone that he fell to the ground lifeless.

The scouts were messengers of death to the savages,

but they were not invulnerable to Indian bullets. Often one was shot down, and during this second winter four fell within forty-eight hours of one another. And death to them, if not instantaneous, was always attended with the extremest tortures. Mercy is not a prominent trait of the Indian character ; but the Cherokee had absolutely no mercy upon the men who retorted upon him his own mode of warfare. And yet, when one scout fell, another was ready to take his place, not led thereto by the scanty pay—for what relish could there be in parched corn, eaten in deadly peril ? They were prompted by mixed motives — love of their friends, hatred of the savages, and, more than all else, by a genuine fondness for excitement and danger.

But, though many of the scouts fell, I question if the mortality was any greater among them than among the other settlers. During the two years that followed the attack on the fort at the Bluff, nearly one half of the whole number perished by violence—that is, one was killed, on an average, during every six days of that whole period. It is hard for us to realize such a state of things : when no man knew but the day might be his last ; when the husband, parting for but a few hours from the wife, took leave of her as if forever ; when women and children said their prayers on going out to milk the cows, or to the spring for a bucket of water. It was one long reign of terror. In the morning it was asked, “How many of us are living ?” and in the evening, “Which of us has been slaughtered

to-day?" The September massacres in the prisons of Paris, which sent a thrill of horror throughout Europe and America, lasted but four days, and, by the best accounts, immolated only a thousand and eighty-nine victims in a population of about a million—that is, about one in every thousand. But these Indian massacres lasted two long years, and at their close every other male settler had fallen by the tomahawk or the Indian rifle. The victims of Paris, too, perished amid a sympathizing world, where millions would bewail their fate and proclaim their virtues. These men were cut off from the world, shut out alike from human succor and human sympathy, and they went down amid the solitude and silence of the wilderness, where few would mourn their fall, and perhaps not even a stone would tell their names to coming generations. But neither isolation nor death could shake the resolution of Robertson. "The God of creation and providence," he said, "never designed these rich and beautiful lands to be given up to wild beasts and savages. They are to be the home of Christianity and civilization." "If we perish here," said his friend Isaac Bledsoe, "others will come to avenge our death, and accomplish the work we have begun. They will find our graves, or our scattered bones, and tell to the ages that we deserved a better fate."

This was the spirit that animated them, and so they met unmoved the extremest perils, and in defiance of starvation, and havoc, and death, held that extreme outpost on the Cumberland.



How, amid such a rain of fire, could these people provide for their daily needs, and pursue the ordinary employments of life? They did do these things. They caught fish from the river, and game from the forest. They planted and sowed, and gathered in their grain. During the entire two years they did not want, though there were times when the corn was measured out, and each one had only a scanty allowance. Many of their cattle were slaughtered by the Indians, but those that were left did not lack for fodder; the cane that grew about the forts supplied them, both in summer and winter, with abundant provender. The settlers also found time to repair their cabins, and to erect others, and even to build grist-mills.

Neither did the colonists lack for clothing, though the women did not wear silks nor the men broadcloth. No supplies came among them after their first arrival; and, as a matter of course, the clothes they brought became in time so worn that even the principal men went about arrayed in shreds and patches. But when patch had been added to patch till there was nothing left of the original garment, and the motley thing had itself fallen in pieces, the settlers had to look about for other wearing material. They had not far to seek. The skin of the deer, the bear, and the buffalo had served to clothe those creatures, and why should it not do a like service to the human animal? They became so expert in dressing these skins—using the brains of the beast as an emollient—as to give them a most pliable texture and

velvety softness. They fashioned them into all kinds of raiment—waistcoats, trousers, hunting-shirts, and even into garments worn next to the person ; and this was the work of the men as well as of the women, as they gathered together around the great wood-fires of the forts in the long winter evenings.

Nearly all the beasts of the forest were made to contribute to their apparel, and when arrayed in this primitive fashion the settler presented a very picturesque appearance. His cap was of fox or wolf skin, the tail dangling behind ; his trousers and hunting-shirt were of deer-skin, fringed with the fur of the bear or panther, and the latter garment belted about with a strip of buffalo-hide, tanned and dyed some bright color. His feet were shod with buffalo-skin, dressed to such softness that his tread was as noiseless as that of “the wild-cat of the mountain.” When he went abroad in winter he threw a robe of this material over his left shoulder—the right being left free to handle his rifle—and, wrapped in this, he slept warmly, even if his bed was a snow-bank. Buffalo-robres were the universal substitute for woolen blankets. A hunting-party seldom went out unless provided with a pack-horse laden with these articles, under which they could sleep perfectly protected from the rain and snow. The dress of the women was of the same material as that of the men, though more ornamented, and cut with greater regard to the “latest fashion.” It was most commonly of deer-skin, dressed to resemble Canton crape, and colored with various vegetable dyes which gave it a brilliant

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and really attractive appearance. Many a backwoods beauty thus adorned is reported to have "smashed the hearts of a dozen adorers"; and her rosy health, supple limbs, rounded figure, and natural grace and loveliness, might have captivated men more familiar with "cultivated" beauty.

Thus the year wore away, and the third winter came on with rain, and sleet, and snow, and a scanty store of corn in the granary. Then the survivors came together again to count up the graves of their fallen, and to number their unburied dead, whose bones were moldering away in unknown nooks of the forest. It was a ghastly reckoning—one to appall the stoutest-hearted; and again they proposed to Robertson to seek safety by abandoning the country. "We are here," they said to him, "standing back to back, all facing outward, like a covey of partridges on watch for a creeping enemy. More than two years have now passed, and a fierce and murderous war is still waged against us. We are fewer in number, and occupy less ground than we did a year ago, and we are decreasing rapidly. We have diminished means for defense or expansion; we are hemmed in and hunted, buffeted and badgered, worse than at first; and we see no prospect for any improvement."

Robertson's reply has been preserved, but there is space here for but a few extracts. He did not attempt to conceal the gravity of the situation, but he opposed the proposition to abandon the settlement. "Where will you go?" he asked. "It is impossible to get to



Kentucky ; the Indians are in force on all the passes thither. For the same reason you can not remove to the settlements upon the Holston. No chance remains but to go down the river in boats, and make our way to the Illinois, where we might find a few friends, or to the French and Spaniards on the lower Mississippi. But to this plan there are insuperable obstacles. With what boats we have a few might get away, risking the dangers of the navigation, and of being shot by the savages on the bluffs, and all along the shores. But how can we obtain timber to build the other boats that will be needed ? The Indians are every day in the skirts of the woods ; we look for them under every shrub, and privet, and cedar, and we find them behind every tree. They are ready to inflict death upon whomsoever shall attempt to fell a tree, to hew out a canoe, or saw it into lumber." Then he spoke feelingly of the sufferings they had endured, and the dangers that then surrounded them. He did not conceal his belief that the savages had resolved to drive them away, or to destroy them ; and he added : "There is danger if we stay, and danger if we attempt to go ; either way we may be destroyed. Every one must decide for himself. Do as you please. My mind is made up. I have never thought of leaving ; I am determined not to leave. Others here think and feel as I do. We know each other. I hope that others of you, who have talked of going, may yet conclude to stay." Then he predicted the speedy and successful termination of the war for independence, and pictured the better day

that would then dawn upon the settlement, when they might rely upon large accessions to their population. Officers and soldiers would come there to select their bounty-lands, and then settle among them. He closed with sententious brevity : “ We have to fight it out here, or to fight our way out from here.”

“ We will fight it out here ! ” echoed Rains as Robertson concluded ; and the words were taken up and repeated by the whole assemblage. After that there were dark days, but never again was there a thought of abandoning the settlement.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE DAY DAWNING.

I NEED not recount the savage warfare of the two years that followed. It would be a mere recital of bloody encounters between white man and red, when both met destruction. Time and again every settler fled to the three stations; and some never reached those places of safety. Some were shot down on the way at noonday, and some awoke at dead of night only to meet the tomahawk of the savage. A party of eleven set out for the Bluff from one of the outlying stations. Encamping for the night, they were awakened by the war-whoop, and only one escaped—a woman, who, with her hair hanging about her, her clothing torn to shreds, her limbs scratched and bleeding, came to the gate of the fort in the morning. With no guide but the stars, she had fled twenty miles through matted undergrowth and privet bushes, leaving her husband and children asleep forever in the forest.

But during the third winter the settlers were comparatively free from savage molestation. The weather

was unusually cold ; and most of the Northern Indians retired to their distant wigwams, while the Chickamaugas—the most troublesome branch of the Cherokees—had full employment in repairing the devastation which Sevier had recently inflicted upon their country. Their provisions having been destroyed, they were forced to stay at home to provide subsistence for their wives and children. The settlers' supply of corn was scanty, and their stock of ammunition again became so reduced that every man was enjoined to be economical in his expenditure of powder and lead. None was wasted in hunting, but the whole kept in reserve against a possible attack from the Indians. But the settlers did not lack for game. Fish was abundant in the river, and bears and deer were easily caught in pens and dead-falls, and rabbits and wild turkeys in snares and traps. Thus fed from the forest and the river, and warmly clad in skins, this band of Crusoes passed the winter securely housed in their log-fortresses, and without any diminution to their numbers. Some few Indians were seen by the spies ; but they did not come near the forts, and no lives were lost in any hostile encounters.

March came, and the sun had begun to melt the snow in the forest and the ice in the river, when there rode up to the Bluff an unexpected troop of horsemen. They were well armed and well mounted, but bore traces of a long journey, and two or three of them had unhealed wounds, which told of some recent encounter. They asked to be allowed to cast in their lot with the settlers.

“Who are you?” was the first and most natural of questions in the circumstances. The strangers frankly answered that they were Tories, who had fled for their lives from the lower Carolinas. Every man of them had borne arms against the country, but now they desired to live at peace with their neighbors. This they could not do over the mountains, for there they were hunted down as criminals. They had nothing but strong arms and sure rifles; but, being granted protection, they would gladly use these in defense of the settlement.

The larger number of the settlers had fought under John Sevier, and had imbibed his intense patriotism, but not his toleration and kindness for even an armed enemy. They regarded a Tory as they did a wild beast—as nearer of kin to the Evil-One than even a Chickamauga savage; and at once, and unanimously, they rejected the overtures of the new-comers. But Robertson opposed this decision. He said that “this is a free country, in which no man should suffer for a mere opinion. Opinion harms no one but the man himself, unless it leads him to unlawful action. These men believe in George Rex, we believe in George Washington. To us one name stands for tyranny, the other for freedom. They think just the contrary; and this opinion of theirs has led them into acts for which they would probably be hanged, if caught over the mountains. This they admit, but say they now want to lead peaceable lives. In other words, they repent, and want space for repentance. We have space enough and to spare; and I am in favor of

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admitting them to a corner of it on probation. If they show themselves to be worthy men, I shall propose to let them stay, provided they make oaths to abjure King George, and to support us and the Continental Congress. I think there may be honest Tories, and I like the frankness of these men. I believe they will show themselves good citizens; if they do not, we are stronger than they—we can either expel them from the settlements, or, if their acts should deserve it, hang them from the nearest tree.”

The Tories were admitted to the community, conducted themselves as good citizens, and thus the colony was re-enforced by about twenty good riflemen. Robertson had heard previously of the surrender of Cornwallis; but these Tories reported that the British forces were shut up in Charleston, and that, about sixty days before, civil government had been re-established in South Carolina. In these two events Robertson saw the beginning of the end, and he bade his comrades to be of good cheer, for the day was dawning.

The next accession to the settlement occurred in the following summer. North Carolina was largely in arrears to her soldiers. She had fed them with poorly lithographed promises; but these were now worth only one cent on the dollar. Two hundred dollars was the price of a bushel of corn; it was also the pay of a private soldier for six months, and consequently he had to live upon two bushels of corn per year. On such rations the soldier could not be expected to do very effective service;

so North Carolina stopped his pay altogether, and said to him, "If you will feed and clothe yourself, and fight like a man to the end of your enlistment, I will, for what I now owe you, and your future service, give you a warrant for a broad farm west of the Alleghanies."

These warrants the State called "bounty-warrants," and the lands "bounty-lands"; but at this distance of time it is not easy to perceive what bounty there was in canceling the just dues of the scarred and war-worn soldier by grants of wild land, which he would have to cultivate with the plow in one hand and a rifle in the other, fighting the Indians at his own expense and risk, and with the express assurance that he was to receive no aid or protection from his government. As these warrants were forced upon the soldier—those, or nothing, being his alternative—there would seem to have been not only meanness, but positive injustice, in the transaction. However, like many other unjust things in this world, it was overruled for good. It secured a more speedy settlement of the country west of the Alleghanies; and, moreover, it sent there the men who had borne the brunt of the war on the seaboard, and who were specially fitted to subdue the savages and the wilderness. They emigrated to the Watauga and the Cumberland by thousands, and it is asserted—and I think with truth—that Tennessee holds to-day the bones of more Revolutionary soldiers than any other State in the Union—all which is due to the "bounty" policy of the parent State, North Carolina.

By the summer of 1782 very many of these "bounty-



warrants" had been issued, and then North Carolina sent out commissioners to "locate" the lands—that is, to ascertain where they were, define their boundaries, and map them with sufficient accuracy to enable the settler to recognize his own property. With these commissioners went a body-guard of one hundred men, and a large number of families took advantage of this guard to secure a safe passage to the Cumberland. Thus were the settlements largely augmented in numbers. One of the commissioners was Isaac Shelby, who soon afterward settled in Kentucky, and became its first Governor; and another, Anthony Bledsoe, an older brother of Isaac Bledsoe, and a trusted friend of Robertson. Bledsoe was a prominent citizen of Southwestern Virginia, had been one of those who rushed to the rescue of the fort at Watauga in 1776, and he had served with distinction in the war, rising to the rank of colonel. He soon afterward settled at Bledsoe's Lick—now Castalian Springs—about thirty-five miles north of Nashville; and his coming brought many of his old companions in arms, and contributed largely to the prosperity and progress of the new settlements.

The return of spring brought a renewal of Indian hostilities. The commissioners, with their guard of a hundred men, were not molested; but any small party venturing into the forest was very sure to have a bloody encounter. Still, either because the Indians were less numerous, or the settlers more cautious, the casualties were fewer during this than any preceding year. The



total death-roll for 1783 was only twenty-one, and five of those lost their lives in an attempt to erect what was afterward known as Buchanan's Station, about five miles southeast from Nashville. The Northern tribes seemed to have given up the contest. The hostiles were generally Chickamaugas; and after September even they suddenly ceased their incursions, for again had Sevier descended upon their towns with fire and sword, forcing them to stay at home to make provision for their families during the winter.

Thus relieved from immediate hostilities, Robertson made overtures of peace to Old Tassel, the well-disposed and peace-loving old man, who had succeeded Oconostota as chief-king of the Cherokees. Robertson, when at Watauga, had held friendly relations with this chieftain; and he felt confident that, if he were assured of the amicable disposition of the whites, he would consent to a treaty that would secure peace with the larger and more orderly portion of his nation. With the lawless Chickamunga bandits there could be no peace. No treaty would bind them. Their natural element was war; and they could be restrained from rapine and bloodshed only by the kind of pressure that Sevier had, time and again, brought upon them.

Robertson's friendly overtures were accepted by Old Tassel, and soon afterward came news of the proclamation of peace with Great Britain. There being no longer any immediate danger from the Indians, the settlers left their crowded quarters in the forts, erected cabins out-

side, and overflowed the country in all directions. The new-comers now flocking into the settlement were generally Revolutionary soldiers, seeking their bounty-lands; but many of them were men of substance, bringing horses, cattle, and other material wealth into the country. Among other things they brought were the "latest fashions," and, seeing those, the original Crusoes once more assumed the raiment of civilization, though to procure it they had to journey hundreds of miles through the woods to the store which General James Wilkinson had recently established at Lexington, Kentucky. The young men, however, still adhered to buckskin hunting-shirts and leather breeches; and it is said that even among the young women some of the undergarments continued to be of the same durable material.

The desperate struggle for her own existence over, North Carolina had time to think of her desolate offspring on the distant Cumberland. She gave them now a legal existence—a Court of Common Pleas and Quarter Sessions, and erected their territory into a county, called Davidson, with the right to send two representatives to the General Assembly. The members at once elected were Robertson and Anthony Bledsoe. Among Robertson's first acts as a member of the Assembly was one to procure the opening of a land-office at the Bluff, and the incorporation of the place as a town under the name of Nashville, in honor of a patriot soldier who had been slain at the battle of Germantown.

Having now a name, a court-house, a prison, and

a dozen log-houses, the present capital of Tennessee may be said to have fairly begun a political existence. The court-house was of logs, "eighteen feet square, with a lean-to of twelve feet on one side of the house," and it was furnished with benches, a bar, and a table for the use of court and jurors. The prison was of about the same style and dimensions; and the dwellings were very much like the edifices still to be seen in the backwoods. They were of logs, generally rough-hewn, and chinked with clay. The windows were mere openings in the walls, secured by a stout shutter, but destitute of glass, though sometimes furnished with oiled paper as a substitute. The floors were of split puncheons, the roofs of clapboards, and the doors of stout plank, hung upon wooden hinges, iron being too scarce and valuable to be used for much besides horse-shoes. The inside furnishing of these domiciles was in keeping with their outer appearance. A few splint-bottom chairs, a rough pine table, a rustic bedstead, or often a pile of buffalo-robies, in use as a bed, were the more prominent articles of furniture.

The land-office was the center of activity in the new town. It was a small shanty of cedar poles, but it was besieged daily with crowds of land-hunters, immigrants, and Revolutionary soldiers, eager to have their claims entered and their lands surveyed, that they might become citizens of the new country. Everything was of the most primitive description, but everywhere could be seen tokens of a coming civilization. Ugly worm-fences were creep-

ing around stumpy or blackened patches of ground, amid which corn was growing, and cane was being stacked for the cattle. In the forest the woodman's axe was echoing, and the great trees were falling, and every here and there a small cabin was going up, to be the home of the settler and his family. It seemed as if a better day had dawned upon the settlement.

Robertson was a regular attendant upon the sessions of the Legislature. The distance from the State capital was seven hundred miles, and for more than half of the way the route was still the hunter's trail through the woods of Kentucky, infested by wild beasts and by savages, who, whether at peace or war, were always belligerents when they could take the white man at a disadvantage in the forest. Immigrants never took the route except in considerable bodies; but Robertson and Bledsoe usually came and went alone, with no other guard than their faithful dogs, that kept watch over them while, wrapped in their buffalo-robcs, and their horses tethered beside them, they made their bivouac among the timber. Single travelers, and even small companies, seldom traversed the route without molestation; but, though he often came upon the Indian camp-fires, Robertson never encountered the savages. No doubt this was partly due to his sleepless vigilance, and skill in wood-craft; still it is most remarkable. Passing unharmed through so many perils, it is not strange that, like Sevier, he came at last to believe that he bore a charmed life, for which no Indian bullet would ever be molded. It is certain

that the loss of his life would have been the death-knell of the settlements along the Cumberland.

Robertson's visits to the Legislature were great events in the little community. On such occasions he carried "the mail," and bore numberless commissions to be executed in the older settlements; and he seldom returned without an extra pack-horse laden with packages for his friends and neighbors. With his head full of great affairs—the designs of the savages, or the legislation needed for the settlement—he had to think of a pound of tea for a neighbor's wife, a blue ribbon for his daughter, or a copy of Dilworth's "Speller," or Cheever's "Accidence" for some aspiring youth who was ambitious to spell and speak the English language with "elegance and propriety." They were a primitive people, and he was their patriarch and lawgiver; but he was also "a servant of servants unto his brethren."

The court which Robertson established was invested with many of the attributes of sovereignty. It was made a legislative body as well as a judicial tribunal. It could enact sumptuary laws, regulate the currency, open roads over other territory, and raise and embody troops—in short, it could do almost anything which did not involve a call upon the State treasury. Its empty exchequer North Carolina guarded with a vigilant parsimony which appears contemptible when it is considered that Robertson and his compatriots were adding a daily increasing value to its vacant lands beyond the Cumberland Mountains. To every enactment was ap-



pended a "Provided always" that the total expense should be borne by the tax-payers of Davidson County. Money and protection were things to be exclusively appropriated to the older counties.

In the exercise of its plenary powers Robertson's "Court of Quarter Sessions" made some enactments which are curiously illustrative of the time, and the character of the settlers. It being important to keep peace with the Indians, the court decreed that no one should be allowed to trade with or visit them without a written permit from the authorities. Profane swearing, intemperance, and other vices were prohibited. It was "Ord<sup>d</sup> yt Samuel Henry be fin<sup>d</sup> 10ss for profanely swearing y<sup>e</sup> pres<sup>nt</sup> of y<sup>e</sup> c<sup>t</sup>"; and even John Rains, the Joab of the young community, was arraigned for profanely abusing a neighbor on the public thoroughfare. As he paid down his fine, the gallant captain remarked to the court: "I do not object to having to pay for speaking the truth; but, fine or no fine, I do insist that he is the d—st scoundrel in the settlement!" adding also some other expletives, which showed that he intended to have the full worth of his ten shillings. The court frequently enforced a State law of 1741, which enjoined the omission of all secular employments, and a punctual attendance on public worship on the Sabbath. Under this act two persons were once arraigned, the one for buying, and the other for selling, a "lying-out" negro on Sunday; but they were both acquitted, because it was shown that they had not consummated the bargain on the holy day.

One had merely said to the other, "If it were not Sunday, I would give you so much for the darkey"; and, as there was no overt action, they were both let off with the verdict of "Not guilty; but don't do so again."

But this godly people did drink whisky. It was brought down the river from Kaskaskia, and was so much in demand that the traders were encouraged to exact for it exorbitant prices. To remedy this evil, the court enacted that no person should be allowed to ask or receive for good "Kaskaskia rum" more than one dollar per gallon. This price having failed to attract the desired supply, an enterprising individual announced his intention to erect a distillery. This Robertson opposed, very much against the sentiment of the majority of the people; and, fearing that the "constitutional right" of his court to prohibit the erection would be questioned, he went direct to the Legislature and procured the passage of a law with this preamble: "Whereas, crops being short, and grain scarce, owing to the obstruction of agriculture by the withdrawal of planters and laborers to oppose the infesting savages, sound discretion requires that the grain should be preserved for the subsistence of the settlers, and of the new immigrants upon their arrival." Therefore, no distillations of corn or other grain should be allowed in Davidson County. The speech which Robertson is reported to have made on this occasion is a model of oratorical brevity. It was simply, "The con-

perversion of the bounty of Providence. It is unserviceable to white men, and devilish for Indians." Robertson held his own against the majority for fully three years; but then the appetites of his constituents got the better of him, and a distillery was erected in the teeth of the law and of his opposition. It was called the "Red Heifer," and the custom of the distiller was to blow a cow's horn whenever a "run" of the hot fluid was ready for his thirsty customers. It was served out in a drinking-cup made from the horn of a buffalo, and the Western phrase, "Taking a horn," is said to have originated from this circumstance.

Among the other laws enacted by Robertson's court was one establishing a legal currency, for even with their primitive habits these people were given to buying and selling. There was not a dollar of gold or silver in the country; and, therefore, Robertson had to look about for some other circulating medium. In a like emergency nearly every one of the colonies had compelled some product of the land or forest to act as a legal tender. Robertson adopted about everything that could be worn or eaten, and he affixed a price to "bounty-warrants" and "guard certificates"—which represented certain quantities of land—thus making *terra firma* itself pass from hand to hand like more portable articles. It became a common expression to say, "I will take, or give," a "three-twenty," or a "six-forty"—those figures denoting so many acres. A valuable six-hundred-and-forty acre tract in the suburbs of Nashville was once sold



for "three axes and two cow-bells," and another for "a good rifle and a clear-toned bell."

Large numbers of Tories, who had been driven from the older counties, began to arrive on the Cumberland soon after the war was over. Such as conducted themselves like good citizens were allowed to remain; but all disorderly characters were driven away, and took final refuge with the Chickamaugas, or with the pirates along the Mississippi. Those who remained were required to take an oath of allegiance; but it was enacted by the court that no one who had borne arms against the country should hold any office, or consent to be a candidate for any, under a penalty of fifty pounds. This does not seem to have deterred some of the Tories from aspiring to local honors, for the penalty was soon increased to five hundred pounds. Robertson was willing to allow to every man freedom of opinion, but none could share in the government of the settlement who had not been loyal to the united colonies.

The organization of a court naturally attracted lawyers to the community. Two came, and soon afterward a physician made his appearance. Their incoming was deplored by Captain Rains, who predicted as a consequence a scourge of lawsuits and diseases. The prediction does not, however, appear to have been fulfilled. The scanty records of the court are evidence of remarkable harmony among the people; and the small number of deaths from natural causes shows that the doctor's medicines, if taken, did no special damage to the com-

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munity. This physician was the inventor of a famous pill, which at first was universally popular; but, it being soon discovered that it was compounded of bread and sugar, his patients decided to take sick and die in the natural manner!

A more important addition to the settlement was the Rev. Thomas B. Craighead, one of the ablest and most self-devoted of those pioneer preachers who did so much for the civilization of the West. Robertson had procured the passage of an act incorporating the "Davidson Academy," and, meeting this gentleman at the State capital, he induced him to accept its presidency, and join him on his return to the Cumberland. A log-building was at once erected and a school opened, where instruction was given in the ordinary English branches at the rate, say the minutes, "of four pounds per annum, to be paid in *hard money*, or other money of that value." This was the beginning of the present "University of Nashville."

The advent of Mr. Craighead was soon followed by that of the Rev. Benjamin Ogden. Mr. Craighead was a scholarly gentleman, fitted to grace the "academic grove"; but Ogden was one of that rare race of men who have their homes in their saddles, write their sermons on horseback, carry their libraries in the crown of their hats, and preach wherever they happen to be—in the log-church, the country school-house, or under some spreading tree of the wide forest. —These circuit-riders have been the true evangelists of the backwoods—worthy dis-

ciples of the Master who "had not where to lay his head"; and the good they have done will never be known till the great day of accounting. At a later time Mr. Ogden had a meeting-house at Nashville; but now he went about from hamlet to hamlet, proclaiming everywhere the "glad tidings," and with such effect that he soon had gathered no less than sixty-three into the fold of the Methodist Church. As a result of his preaching, small log-buildings began to spring up about the settlements, to be used as school-houses on week-days and as churches on Sundays. A description of one of these primitive edifices I extract from an old chronicle:\* "A heavy piece of plank or hewn timber had holes bored through it with a large auger, and four legs inserted, and these were placed in front of the pulpit and occupied by men and women, who all sat apart. No book, no cushions, no kneeling-stools, no carpets—the naked floor and hard seats; and here the congregation would often remain patiently while two long sermons were delivered. Long journeys were taken in those days to attend religious services, and the people always attended dressed in their best Sunday-clothes. Mothers would carry their children for miles to enjoy a 'gospel feast.' Many of the poorer classes of young women went on foot, and carried their shoes and stockings in their hands, rolled up in cotton handkerchiefs, till they came near the meeting-house, when they would

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\* Quoted in Clayton's "History of Davidson County."

turn aside, array their feet, and appear in the congregation as neat as a new pin."

Following the peace with the Cherokees there were for a time fewer depredations from the Indians; but in the summer of 1784 small bands again began to prowl around the settlements. They soon became so troublesome that Robertson increased his force of scouts to about a hundred, whom he kept, under Captain Rains, constantly patrolling the forest. This, however, withdrew so many from agricultural employments that at the opening of the next Legislature he applied for a force of three hundred men, to serve as a permanent guard, and to open a wagon-road from the Clinch River to Nashville, and, when it was finished, attend at stated points to escort immigrants to the Cumberland. The law was passed with the usual proviso "that the moneys arising from the tax of land west of the Appalachian Mountains shall be appropriated to the purpose of discharging the expense of raising, clothing, arming, and supporting the troops to be embodied." The same act provided that four hundred acres of land west of the mountains should be laid off for six months' pay of each private, and a proportionate quantity for any further service. The officers of this guard, also, should be paid in a like manner.

The law was passed, but it was nearly two years before the force was fully raised. The men were recruited principally in the Watauga district, and placed under command of Nathaniel Evans, who had an honorable record as one of Sevier's captains; but as the troops

could not well subsist upon land, the Davidson County court levied a tax for their support upon the inhabitants, "payable in specifics," such as corn, beef, pork, and other provisions, and a small amount in money to defray the expense of delivery at the stations. Each man was also entitled to receive in each year "one blanket, one good woolen or fur hat, one pair of buckskin breeches, and one ditto waistcoat, lined."

When the road was opened, a larger number of immigrants began to seek the Cumberland region—not only horsemen, carrying their entire household goods upon a single led animal, but wagon-trains, laden with the effects of a more wealthy class of settlers. The route had never been trodden by immigrants, and the passage across the mountain is described as picturesque beyond description. Dark laurel-thickets, and frowning cliffs and precipices, guarded the way to the summit-level, where a boundless natural meadow stretched away in all directions, walled in by gigantic ledges of stratified limestone and sandstone, which had stood there in solitude since the primeval ages. This—the Cumberland Table-Land—was all a vast upland prairie, carpeted with luxuriant grasses and flowering plants, and tenanted, as far as the eye could see, by immense herds of elk, deer, and buffalo, gamboling in playful security, undisturbed by the approach of man, and unterrified by the explosion of his death-dealing rifle.

The appearance of this force of riflemen soon drove away the marauding savages, and the incoming settlers



were not molested. Among those who now came in were Valentine Sevier, the brother of John Sevier, and the families of the brothers Bledsoe, and of Evan and Moses Shelby, and John Donelson. The settlements were extended as far away as the present town of Clarksville; and in a census taken about this time to levy the tax for the support of the soldiery, the number of white men above twenty-one years is given as four hundred and seventy-seven, and of male colored servants as a hundred and five. Nashville shared in the general prosperity. It had been laid out into two hundred one-acre lots, twenty-six of which were at once sold at the price of four pounds each, with the condition that the purchaser should build and finish within three years one well-framed log, brick, or stone house, "sixteen feet square at least, and eight feet clear in the pitch." The place had now a courthouse, a jail, an academy, and a distillery, and nothing further was wanted to make it a center of eighteenth-century civilization but a store for the barter and sale of general merchandise; therefore, great was the universal joy when, one sunshiny day in March, 1784, ten pack-horses, which had journeyed for six weeks from Philadelphia, over the Cumberland Mountains, and all the way across the State of Virginia, halted before a rough log-shanty on the main thoroughfare, and unloaded their freight of pins and needles, cheap calicoes and linens, and coarse woolens, in the presence of the whole assembled township. Heretofore the nearest market for the settler's peltries, and the only place where he could procure any article of civilized

apparel, had been the store of General Wilkinson, at Lexington, Kentucky ; but henceforth he was to have both market and supply at his own doorway. This fact, more than the presence of the fort, the court-house, the jail, or the distillery, tended to make Nashville the metropolis of the growing settlements.

It seemed now as if the colony were at last established upon a secure and permanent basis, and that the faith, courage, and fortitude of Robertson were about to receive their appropriate reward. No doubt he thought so, and felt a thrill of pride when he looked on what his hands had wrought. Few men have walked this earth with a firmer tread, a clearer eye, a more upright soul than he ; but even he could not discern the gathering cloud, or hear the far-off, muttering thunder—the portent of the storm of war which was about to burst upon the devoted settlement.



## CHAPTER IV.

### A RAID UPON THE CREEKS.

IN a previous volume,\* I have given a brief outline of the Spanish imbroglio which from 1784 to 1796 harassed the border settlements, and threatened to sever the trans-Alleghany region from the Union. I need not here repeat what is there said ; but, as that complication entailed upon Robertson twelve more years of savage warfare, it is necessary, to a clear understanding of the narrative, that some further reference should here be made to it.

By the treaty with France of 1763, Great Britain had acquired possession of all the territory along the eastern bank of the Mississippi, and of the right to navigate that river through its whole extent ; and when she acknowledged American independence, she transferred this territory, and right of navigation, to the United States. It was subsequent to this cession that she ceded to Spain her rights to the Floridas. As a consequence, the American right was prior to that of Spain ;

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\* "John Sevier as a Commonwealth-Builder," pp. 103-112.

but Spanish troops had, during the Revolution, taken from Great Britain some few feeble posts east of the great river ; and on the strength of this Spain laid claim, as early as 1780, to a portion of what is now Kentucky, to all of Tennessee that lies west of the Hiwassee, Tennessee, and Clinch Rivers, and to nearly the whole of the present States of Alabama and Mississippi. The answer to this claim was that, down to the thirty-first parallel, all east of the Mississippi was within the American boundary, and that the United States had never contemplated, or agreed upon, any division of territory with their allies. Robertson had settled within these limits ; and the importance of his settlement, in a national point of view, was that, by virtue of it, possession had been taken of this disputed territory by the United States. Moreover, Robertson had opened a way over which Anglo-Saxon immigration would speedily pass to the Mississippi Valley. This would endanger the Spanish possessions west of that river. Not only the principles of the two governments were antagonistic ; the character, sentiments, and habits, of the two races were so at variance that they could not exist together, or as near neighbors. The truth was crudely expressed by a Creek chieftain. "Indians and Spaniards," he said, "can ride the same pony—the Indian on before. But Americans must always ride in front. If they get up behind, they soon take the reins, and manage the pony." This fact was well understood by the Spaniards.

The Count of Aranda, the able prime minister of

Spain, had advised Charles III to unite with France in supporting the cause of the revolted colonies ; but he had no sooner affixed his signature to the Treaty of 1783, which acknowledged their independence, than he addressed a secret memoir \* to his sovereign, in which he expressed the opinion that Spain had acted in opposition to her interests in espousing the cause of the United States, because the existence of a free government in America would be highly dangerous to the Spanish-American possessions. "This federal republic," he said, "is born a pygmy. It has required the support of two such powerful states as France and Spain to obtain its independence. The day will come when it will be a giant, a colossus formidable even to these countries. It will forget the services it has received from the two powers, and will think only of its own aggrandizement. The liberty of conscience, the facility of establishing a new population upon immense territories, together with the advantages of a new government" (meaning, doubtless, *free*) "will attract the agriculturists and mechanics of all nations, for men ever run after fortune ; and, in a few years, we shall see the tyrannical existence of this very colossus of which I speak. . . .

"The first step of this nation, after it has become powerful, will be to take possession of the Floridas, in order to have the command of the Gulf of Mexico, and, after having rendered difficult our commerce with New

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\* "De Bow's Review," May number, 1847, p. 411.

Spain, it will aspire to the conquest of that vast empire, which it will be impossible for us to defend against a formidable power established on the same continent, and in its immediate neighborhood. These fears are well founded; they must be realized in a few years, if some greater revolution, even more fatal, does not sooner take place in our Americas."

Events have shown that these views were prophetic. They shaped the subsequent policy of Spain, and they explain the tenacity with which she held on to every acre of soil that would serve as a rampart to her North American possessions; and account for the duplicity, falsehood, and wholesale assassination, to which she was ready to resort to cripple the power of the newborn giant of the West. But watchful as she was of the growth of this young Hercules, she seems to have overlooked the fact that its advance-guard—few in number, but with the open Bible in their hands—had already scaled the Alleghanies, and was even then proclaiming civil and religious liberty at the very doorway of her dominions.

The attention of the Spanish authorities appears to have been first drawn to this fact, and its probable consequences, by Alexander McGillivray, a half-breed chief of the Creek nation. This man is one of the most picturesque characters in Southwestern history, and, inasmuch as he exerted a strong influence upon the events I am narrating, he requires here a few words of description. He was more a white man than an Indian. His

father was a Scotch gentleman of good lineage, and his mother a Creek princess of the most influential family in the nation. Her father had been a French officer of Spanish extraction, and consequently McGillivray had in his veins the blood of four races, while in his character were the characteristics of them all—the cool sagacity of the Scotchman, the polished urbanity of the Frenchman, the subtle duplicity of the Spaniard, and the unrelenting hate and remorseless cruelty of the Creek Indian. His natural talents were of a high order, and had been carefully cultivated by his father's brother, who had designed him for a civilized career; but, on arriving at early manhood, he had preferred to go back to his mother's people, among whom he soon rose to the position to which he was entitled by the rank of his family and his own uncommon ability. The Creeks had no king, but a multitude of elective chiefs, each one supreme in his own town, and independent of any central authority. However, these chiefs usually acted in concert, and submitted to the leadership of some one of commanding abilities. Though not of their nation, Oconostota, the famous king of the allied Cherokees, had been their acknowledged leader for nearly half a century; but he was no sooner dethroned, than McGillivray was admitted to supreme authority in the nation.

He at once assumed the degree of state that seemed to him becoming to a leader of ten thousand redoubtable warriors. He took to himself a number of wives, and built and furnished as many "palaces," where he dwelt

in a sort of barbaric splendor, and entertained his visitors with a prodigal hospitality. He never moved about among his own people but with a numerous escort, nor traveled among the whites without a brace of body-servants, arrayed in gorgeous livery. His raiment was a strange mixture of savagery and civilization, as also was his nature, in which were blended the cultivated gentleman and the wild Indian chief; the polished Greek and Latin scholar and the untamed savage, following the trail of his enemy with the keen scent and ferocity of the panther. His personal appearance, as described by the historian of Alabama, was as peculiar as his character. He was, it is said, six feet high, spare made, and remarkably erect in person and carriage. His eyes were large, dark, and piercing. "His forehead was so peculiarly shaped that the old Indian countrymen often spoke of it. It commenced expanding at his eyes, and widened considerably at the top of his head. It was a bold and lofty forehead. His fingers were long and tapering, and he wielded a pen with the greatest rapidity. His face was handsome, and indicative of quick thought and much sagacity. Unless interested in conversation, he was disposed to be taciturn, but even then was polite and respectful."\*

The same historian likens him to Talleyrand; and he had some of the qualities of that statesman, for he succeeded in persuading British, Spaniards, and Ameri-

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\* Pickett's "History of Alabama," vol. ii, p. 142.



cans that he was honestly serving their interest, when all the while he was only faithfully pursuing his own. He played them all like puppets against one another, and so is entitled to rank as a rare if not a great diplomatist. He had actively aided the British in the Revolution, and in retaliation the Americans had confiscated some of his property. This had excited his deep animosity; and the war was no sooner over, than he determined to have his revenge by the extermination of every American settler beyond the Alleghanies. This he could accomplish only by a combination of all the Western tribes, and by such an alliance with Spain as would supply him with the requisite arms and ammunition.

The treaty of peace of September, 1783, was no sooner known to McGillivray, than he wrote to the Spanish Governor of Pensacola, proposing a treaty of alliance and commerce with Spain. In this letter he adroitly alluded to the Western settlers, and spoke of their rapid increase and progress toward the Mississippi, where, he said, if they once formed settlements, it would require "much time, trouble, and expense to dislodge them." He also stated that the settlers were employing every means to make his nation their friends, and that, if an alliance were not effected between himself and the Spaniards, the Creeks might become dangerous neighbors by assisting the Americans in their hostile designs upon Mobile, Pensacola, and the other Spanish possessions.



This threat was not needed to bring the Spaniards into the savage coalition, for both they and McGillivray had the same object. A treaty was accordingly entered into between them at Pensacola on June 1, 1784, by which the Spaniards agreed to supply McGillivray with arms and ammunition without limit, and, to whet his zeal, promised him a private pension. Subsequent correspondence between McGillivray and Miro, the Spanish Governor of Louisiana, fully reveals the fact that the object of this treaty was the total breaking up of all the American settlements west of the Alleghanies. It was intended to be secret, for the policy of the Spanish Government was not to array itself in open hostility to the newly-formed United States. However, to discourage further settlements beyond the mountains, the Spanish king announced to Congress that under no circumstances would he consent to the navigation of the Mississippi by the Americans.

The force which McGillivray relied upon to exterminate the Watauga and Cumberland settlers numbered not far from twenty thousand warriors. He was himself the recognized head of eight thousand—six thousand Creeks and two thousand Seminoles—he could rely absolutely upon two thousand Chickamaugas; and he expected to encounter no difficulty in enlisting the remaining three thousand Cherokees, and seven thousand Choctaws and Chickasaws. These Indians were the bravest and most warlike on the American Continent, and the Creek chief was justified in thinking that with

them he could sweep Sevier and Robertson and their forty-five hundred no better-armed riflemen beyond the Alleghanies. The Kentucky settlers he would leave to the Northern Indians, who gave so crushing a defeat to General Saint Clair a few years later, and who, he thought, could easily be brought into the coalition. It was to be a similar combination to that planned by Tecumseh twenty-seven years later, and having the vast advantage of operating against a far weaker enemy.

But one half of these Indians hung back from the coalition—the three thousand Cherokees, from a dread of John Sevier's rifles; and the seven thousand Choc-taws and Chickasaws, because of the friendship which Piomingo, the Chickasaw chief, had conceived for Robertson. With less than the whole twenty thousand, McGillivray deemed it hazardous to move against Sevier; for what Indian blood was in him shared the superstitious dread that was felt by the rest of his race for the "Great Eagle of the pale-faces." Hence, he deferred a general attack until he could personally visit the reluctant tribes and bring them into his measures. Meanwhile he would give his immediate followers a taste of blood by letting them loose upon the four hundred and seventy-seven settlers who were holding their ground with Robertson on the remote Cumberland.

The odds were terrible; but again that heroic handful withstood the overwhelming tide of barbarism. Once more the Indians were on every by-path and around every man's dwelling, and again all the settlers had to flee to

the fortified stations. Three of Robertson's sons, his trusted friends the two Bledsoes, and, in fact, nearly all the leading men in the Cumberland settlements, were struck down by the tomahawk before the conflict ended; but, where one old settler fell, two new-comers took his place, and thus was that more than Roman hero enabled to continue the contest, and to hold that remote outpost of civilization. Piomingo stood firmly by his side, and even took the war-path against his enemies; but on two occasions it was only timely help from Sevier that saved the settlements from extermination.

McGillivray did not at once descend upon the Cumberland settlers in overwhelming numbers. A war of extermination did not at first comport with Spanish policy. The end of Spain would be gained if the colonists were driven beyond the Alleghanies. McGillivray, therefore, let loose upon them at the moment only so many of his savages as would suffice to drive away the settler's game, stampede his cattle and horses, destroy his crops and growing grain, and render his life so insecure that he would be glad to abandon the settlements. This was the policy at first agreed upon between the Creek chief and the representatives of his Catholic Majesty.

The principal Creek towns were nearly three hundred miles south from Nashville, and, to make a nearer rallying-point for his warriors, McGillivray established a village on the west bank of the Tennessee, near the site of the present town of Tuscumbia, one of the most

charming spots in Alabama. The place was called Occoposwo—a name which, in the Creek language, signifies cold water—and it was so styled from a luxuriant spring which gushes from a cave near the river, and now supplies water to the neighboring village. From this point the Indians could float down the Tennessee to within a short distance of the Cumberland settlements, and, though not much more than a hundred miles away, could here secrete their booty in absolute security—their locality unsuspected by the whites, for no Indian town had ever been known in that region. Word of the intended hostilities had been sent to the Chickamaugas, whose towns were higher up on the same river, and a body of about sixty of that lawless tribe, under the chief Scola-Cutta, or, as he was styled by the whites, “Hanging Maw,” were the first to go upon the war-path.

To this small party Robertson himself came near falling a victim. He had gone into the forest, accompanied by a surveyor, and Colonel Weakley, a prominent citizen, when he was suddenly surrounded by this body of savages. His dogs were with him—some of the same ferocious creatures which had saved his life in the attack on the fort at Nashville. Every settler kept a pack of these animals, and he never ventured into the woods without one or more of them. To their watchful sagacity he often owed his life and the safety of his dwelling. They had a natural antipathy to an Indian, and no length of acquaintance, or amount of caresses, would avail to win for him their confidence. If even a friendly Chickasaw

came to the settlements they would follow him about, watch his every gesture, and thrust themselves between him and their master on all occasions, with every evidence of watchful animosity. In the forest they would scent an Indian as they would a deer, and they could not be quieted till their warnings were heeded. The most of them were of a species of hound, of graceful form, large pendulous ears, and eyes denoting great sagacity and intelligence. Very docile with their masters, they were very savage with his enemies. They were greatly dreaded by the Indians, who often fled before them as if they had been human antagonists. On this occasion the dogs gave timely notice of the approach of "Hanging Maw" and his sixty Chickamaugas, and Robertson and his companions at once sprang upon their horses and made all speed to the fort. The Indians followed in a desperate chase, for "Hanging Maw" knew Robertson, and it would have won him great glory to have killed or captured the "chief of the pale-faces." Robertson and Weakley got away in safety, but the surveyor was overtaken, shot down, and horribly mangled.

A few days subsequently this same body of savages came upon a party of six surveyors, who had gone into camp for the night upon a small island formed by a little creek that flows into the Cumberland near the present town of Williamsburg. The men had removed their hats and shoes, and were gathered about the fire in preparation for the night's sleep, when suddenly their dogs gave the usual warning of an enemy. The men listened, but,



knowing of no hostile Indians, they thought the alarm was caused by wolves that were attracted by the remains of their venison supper. Seeing in this no danger, they heaped more logs upon the fire, and threw themselves upon the ground around it for rest and slumber. This all had done except John Peyton, the leader of the party, when there was a sudden report from a score of near-by rifles, and four of the six were more or less wounded. Springing to his feet, Peyton threw his buffalo-robe over the fire, to give his men a chance to escape in the darkness. This they did, wounded as they were, and, after incredible hardships and hair-breadth escapes, made their way to Bledsoe's Station, forty miles distant. There Peyton learned the name of the chief who had attacked his party, and soon afterward he sent him word that he would be welcome to the horses, guns, blankets, and other articles he had captured, if he would return to him his chain and compass. "Hanging Maw" sent this reply: "You, John Peyton, ran away like a coward, and left all your property. As for your *land-stealer*—I have broken that against a tree."

These two attacks spread instant alarm throughout the settlements, which now were scattered for fifty miles up and down the Cumberland; and the terror was increased when it was soon discovered that the small band of Chickamaugas had been re-enforced by much larger numbers. The more exposed positions were at once abandoned, and again all the people gathered together in the stronger stations, as they had done during the previ-

ous war with the Cherokees. Once more it was death to venture beyond rifle-range of a fort. Still, the conflict was not so very unequal. Counting boys above sixteen, the settlers able to bear arms now numbered above six hundred, every one of whom was at once enrolled and placed under competent captains. At least one half of this force, under such experienced woodsmen as Rains and Castleman, were kept in bodies of about fifty, constantly patrolling the forest, and woe to the savages with whom they came in contact! A rifle never cracked but it sounded the death-knell of an Indian; but, where one fell, another rose in his place, and so the bloody work was continued.

What at first gave Robertson the most concern was the fact that the defeated Indians invariably retreated westward, in the direction of the towns of his friends the Chickasaws. This indicated that Piomingo was playing him false, and that he had now to confront the Choctaws and Chickasaws, as well as the lawless Chickamaugas. This, surely, was bad enough, but it was worse to feel his confidence abused—and he had trusted Piomingo implicitly. He sent to him a plain “talk,” frankly stating his suspicions, and the grief they gave him. The answer which came from the Indian chief gave assurance of his friendship, but disclosed to Robertson a more formidable enemy.

“The heart of Piomingo,” said the chief, “is sore at the thought that has come to his white brother. His heart is straight, and so is the heart of Piomingo. Not



one of Piomingo's young men has been upon the war-path against the children of his white brother. The servants of the King of Spain have been among the young men of the Chickasaws, tempting them with large money to take the scalps of his brother's white children, and to drive them beyond the mountains; but the young men would not listen. The great enemy of the white chief is the King of Spain; he has seduced the Creeks to make war upon him; but why they have always come westward when they have fled before his white brother, Piomingo does not understand, unless they have built a town somewhere upon the great river Cherokee" (Tennessee) "in which to hide their plunder. Piomingo does not love the Creeks, and he will send some of his young men upon a long hunt to find the town where they hide, that his white brother may come upon and punish them as they deserve."

The result was the discovery of the town of Cold-water by two of Piomingo's warriors, whom he at once dispatched to Robertson with directions to guide him to the Creek stronghold. It would be a most hazardous enterprise—the raid of a handful into the very heart of the Indian country; for, to leave the settlements properly protected, Robertson would be able to take only a small force on the expedition. But, at whatever hazard, Robertson felt that something must be done to stop the inroads of the savages upon the settlements. Not a week passed but they were seen lying in wait about some of the stations, and one by one the best

men among the settlers were falling. John Donelson had been shot down while riding alone in the woods ; and only a few days before, Robertson's own brother, Mark, had been waylaid, on returning from a social visit to his family, and brutally slaughtered when within half a mile of his dwelling. Sevier's tactics of carrying the war into the enemy's country had always been successful, and this now seemed to Robertson his only hope of securing peace to the settlements. None of the settlers had ever been south of the Tennessee, and a knowledge of the country around Coldwater was essential to the success of the expedition. Everything, therefore, would depend upon the good faith of the Chickasaw guides ; but with one of them—a chief named Toka—Robertson was well acquainted, and he thought he could be trusted.

The expedition decided on, a call was made for volunteers, and one morning in June large numbers came together at Robertson's plantation, about four miles west of Nashville, known to this day as the "Camp-Ground." Only one hundred and eighty were selected for the expedition, but among them were Rains's and Castleman's rangers, every one of whom was skilled in woodcraft, and equal to a dozen not familiar with Indian warfare. All were well armed with rifles and hunting-knives, and each one carried a plentiful supply of dried meat and parched corn in his knapsack. A canoe of rawhides, light enough to be borne on the back of a horse, was taken along to ferry the arms and ammunition across the Tennessee, but the crossing of the men

was to be accomplished by swimming, or by means of boats which the guides thought could be captured from the Indians.

All being in readiness to set out, the men were marched into Nashville, to take a farewell of their wives and children, who had gathered there from all the nearby stations. It was an anxious time, for all knew the desperate character of the expedition, and mothers bade good-by to sons, and wives to husbands, as if they might never see them again. The little army was to set out in two bodies: one portion, of a hundred and thirty men, under Robertson, to proceed on horseback through the forest; the rest, under Moses Shelby and Robert Hays, a son-in-law of Donelson, to make their way in boats down the Cumberland and up the Tennessee. The boats were laden with surplus provisions, and would afford a comfortable conveyance to any who might be disabled by wounds or sickness. The two parties were to meet at a point on the Tennessee which is still known as Colbert's Landing—so called from a Chickasaw chief who there exacted toll from all who passed up and down the river.

Leaving the settlements in command of Colonel Bledsoe, Robertson set out on his hazardous expedition. His route lay through an unbroken forest, never before trodden by a white man. Success depended upon the secrecy of his movements; and therefore, avoiding the Indian trail over which the marauding Creeks had come to the settlements, lest he should be seen and re-

ported by some roving band, he struck into the wide wilderness, taking his way across swift mountain-streams and through deep, rocky defiles, where often his men had to dismount to cut a path for their horses amid the tangled undergrowth. His only guide was the sun, for the Chickasaws had followed the accustomed trail, and knew no better than he the way through the untrodden forest. Thus the party journeyed for a week, when, about noon of the seventh day, they heard a low, rumbling sound, as of far-away thunder. The air was still, the vertical sun shining in unclouded splendor; therefore the sound could be no other than the distant roar of the furious Tennessee where it races down the long rapids still known as the Muscle Shoals. Near the foot of those shoals was the town of Coldwater, and with renewed courage the weary men pressed more eagerly forward. Rapidly the sound came nearer, till it echoed among the trees like the long roll of countless drums calling them to battle.

At sunset they went into bivouac, and Robertson sent out the two Chickasaw guides, and a half-dozen of his best woodsmen, to reconnoitre. Meanwhile, their horses attended to, the men gathered around the campfires for their evening meal, and to discuss in low tones the chances of the day that was coming. Each one spoke with bated breath, for all knew they were near the Creek stronghold, and that any unusual sound might bring upon them an overwhelming force of the enemy. Some few of the number had been with the murdered Donel-

son on the memorable Sunday of March 12, 1780, when with a hundred and thirty helpless women and children, and but a slender guard, he ran those dangerous rapids under a running fire from two thousand Chickamaugas ; and now, as the dull roar of the falls came to their ears, Robert Cartwright, one of the adventurous guard, rehearsed to his comrades the story. He told how for three long hours, at furious speed, the little fleet of forty flat-bottomed boats and canoes plunged down those thirty miles of whirlpool, the water foaming and eddying before them, and on either shore the remorseless savage, his gun poised for their destruction ; how the frail boats were dashed about in the rough river, caught now upon some projecting rock, whirled now off into the mad stream, and now shot forward with a velocity so fearful that the weary voyagers momentarily expected to be dashed in pieces. A watery grave yawned in their front, a death still more horrible was on either flank ; but those brave men, with iron sinews, bent to their oars, and at last guided the frail fleet through in safety. It was a stirring tale, and as the men listened each one felt a thrill of vengeance, and longed impatiently for the morrow. Doubtless they would encounter some of those same savages at the Coldwater.

At midnight the scouts returned, reporting the river ten miles away, and yet so clear was the air that the roar of the rapids seemed to be at not half that distance. Now the knowledge of the Chickasaw guides became of value to the expedition. They had visited



the place on but one occasion, but so keen is the observation of the Indian that, having once obtained their bearings, the entire locality was distinctly mapped in their minds. The town of Coldwater was on the opposite shore and several miles lower down the river; and due south from the encampment was a smaller town, which now appeared to be deserted. At this point the river was a mile in width, but the water was at so low a stage that for three fourths of the distance it could be forded; the rest of the way would require a stout boat, or a strong swimmer, for the current was rapid, and the water foamed among breakers. Some miles higher up was a better crossing, but with this the guides were not acquainted. At Coldwater Robertson had expected to encounter several hundred Indians, but the deserted condition of the smaller town indicated that the most of them were now away on marauding expeditions. If this were so, his expedition would be well-nigh fruitless. However, he would move forward to the river at the nearest crossing, and then let his movements be governed by circumstances.

Robertson had laid himself down under a wide-branching tree for a few hours' sleep, when he was suddenly awakened by one of his outer pickets, who reported that he had been fired upon by a strolling Indian. The picket had pursued the "rascal" for some distance, but he was fleet of foot, and had got safely away into the forest. He had fled toward the southeast—the direction of the Chickamauga towns in the vicinity of Look-

out Mountain—and a day's travel at an Indian's pace would bring him to the lair of the banditti. This would apprise them of the presence of Robertson, and one of two results would follow : either they would surmise that the whites were coming to attack them, and so would remain to defend their homes ; or they would divine the real object of the expedition, and drop down in their canoes to the re-enforcement of Coldwater. The first was the more likely supposition, for Robertson was some distance to the east of a direct course to the Creek stronghold. This fact would probably mislead the Chickamaugas for a time, but only for a time—as soon as they discovered their mistake they would hasten to the succor of their comrades. In either event the safety of the expedition now depended upon the celerity as well as the secrecy of its movements.

With the first glow of dawn the little army began its march at a slow pace, and in utter silence. At noon they came in sight of the broad Tennessee, skirted here with a forest of cane, fifteen and twenty feet high, and so dense that the crashing through it of a body of horsemen would surely be heard by an enemy on the opposite shore. Secrecy for the moment was of more importance than celerity, so the men were halted in the outskirts of the cane, while Toka and a few of the rangers were sent forward to reconnoitre. Proceeding cautiously on foot, they soon came to the bank of the river, which here spreads out like a mountain-lake, broad and sluggish, and, except in mid-channel, very



shallow. Secreting themselves in a cave at the water's edge, the scouts anxiously scanned the river. Just above them were the Muscle Shoals, uttering the same deep bass which had greeted the dawn of creation ; and opposite was the Indian town, silent and deserted, with not the crow of a cock, or the yelp of a dog, to break the ominous stillness.

So the men waited in utter silence till the west-going sun was several hours below the meridian, and then the quick ear of Toka caught a faint sound from among the deserted cabins. Soon a couple of Indians crept down to the opposite shore, and gazed cautiously up and down the river. For a while they stood there in silence, as if listening intently ; then, hearing and seeing nothing to cause alarm, they waded boldly out to a small island near to that bank of the river. Here they unmoored a large canoe which had been hidden among the cane, and paddled out as if to cross to where the scouts were secreted. Toka looked at his white companions, and each one unslung his rifle in readiness for their coming. But the Indians halted in mid-river, abandoned the canoe to the current, and plunged into the water. After disporting in it for a time, they recovered the canoe, and paddled back to the island. Then wading ashore, they disappeared in the forest ; and one of the men went back to Robertson to report what they had witnessed. The inference he drew was that the presence of his little force was not yet discovered—the wary approach of the two Indians to the river he attributed to the natural caution

of the savage. However, the incident showed that he was in hourly danger of being seen by some straggler from Coldwater, and he determined to cross the Tennessee that night at all hazards. If this were not done before the Indians had knowledge of his presence, a small body of them might so post themselves as to render the crossing extremely dangerous, if not altogether impossible.

Rains had been dispatched up the river, with a small party of rangers, to discover any movement in that direction; and now a messenger was sent after him with orders to return to the encampment. He soon arrived, reporting that he had gone fifteen miles, but had seen nothing. Evidently the Chickamaugas were as yet in ignorance of Robertson's movements. If they would remain in that condition another twenty-four hours, Robertson would let them dwell in security, for he was not fool-hardy enough to court a conflict in the open field with two thousand of the most savage warriors on the continent. At last night came, and then with his little army he moved cautiously forward to the river.

The night was without a moon, but the sky was clear, and the stars were out in their brightness. The rawhide boat was launched, and loaded with the arms and ammunition, and Robertson called for volunteers to swim to the island, and bring over the canoe of the Indians. Two expert swimmers at once came forward, and, without any ceremony, plunged into the river and disap-

## 100 ADVANCE-GUARD OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION.

peared in the darkness. They were gone so long that it was feared some mishap had befallen them, but at last they returned with the canoe, accounting for the long delay by saying they "had got bothered in the darkness, and swam a long time without making much headway, but finerly tuck a star to course by, and landed safely." The canoe was old and leaky ; but filling its rents with some of their garments, about forty men embarked in it and set out for the opposite shore. They had not gone far before the leaky craft began to sink, and they were obliged to return and repair damages. This consumed the most of the night, for the woods had to be searched for the bark of the linn-tree with which to patch the rents ; and day had begun to dawn when the forty were landed on the opposite shore. Stout swimmers had at the same time propelled over the rawhide boat, and now, supplied with their arms, the men took position to repel any sudden assault from the Indians. Seeing that their companions had safely crossed the river, the men on the other bank now plunged into the stream, and—some on the backs of their horses, and some swimming by their sides—they all reached the opposite shore in safety.

The sun had risen with a cloudless sky, but the men had no sooner landed than one of those sudden storms to which this region is subject burst upon them, and till it was over the whole party took refuge in the deserted cabins. Here they dried their clothes as well as they could, and freshly primed their rifles, and then, the

clouds clearing away, they mounted their horses. A well-beaten path led directly from where they were to the town of Coldwater, and entering this they moved silently forward. At the distance of about five miles they came to an Indian corn-field, which the guides reported to be about two miles from the village. Here they left the path, and, striking directly through the forest, soon came to the narrow creek which is formed by the overflow of the spring that gave its name to Coldwater. About three hundred yards away was the Indian town, and there, seated carelessly on the grass, were forty-five Creek and Cherokee warriors, and nine French and Spanish traders—the larger number of the savages being away marauding among the settlements. The canoes of the Indians were moored at the mouth of the creek, and expecting they would attempt to escape in them, Robertson dispatched Rains and a small force in that direction. The crossing of the creek, and the path beyond, would admit of the passage of but one horseman at a time, and in this order the little force now struck into a gallop, Robertson leading the way.

The rest is soon told. Twenty-six Indians and four of the traders were slain on the spot—some on the green, and some by Rains in the river. The remaining traders surrendered; but the other savages escaped, to carry fire-brands throughout the two Indian nations. Among the killed were two prominent chiefs—one a Creek, the other a Cherokee. A large amount of traders' goods were found in the cabins, and also a plentiful supply of arms

and ammunition bearing the brands of the Spaniards. This last fact was convincing evidence that Spain was abetting the Creeks in their attacks upon the settlements.

The captured goods being removed to the canoes, fire was set to the dwellings, and Coldwater went up in a smoke that might have been seen as far away as Chickamauga. Then, setting a strong guard, the little army encamped for the night, and in the morning took up its march homeward. A small force was detailed to man the boats, which were to drop down to Colbert's Landing, and there wait to ferry the others across the river. The two bodies met there about sunset, when the prisoners were given a boat and their personal goods, and allowed to go at liberty. At the same time Toka, and the other Chickasaw, were each presented with a horse, a rifle, and an abundance of the captured wares, and sent away rejoicing to their nation. In nineteen days from his setting out, Robertson was back at Nashville, with not a man of his command wounded or missing.

A like good fortune did not attend the party of fifty who set out by water for Colbert's Landing. They had proceeded safely down the Cumberland, and were slowly rowing up the Tennessee, when at the mouth of Duck River, Shelby's boat was fired upon by a large body of Indians lying in ambush on the shore, and nine of his men were more or less badly wounded. Drawing quickly out of rifle-range, the officers of the several boats held a consultation. They were propelling their way against



the current, and their progress would of necessity be so slow that the enemy on shore could easily outstrip them, and pour upon them a constant fire, against which their open boats afforded no protection. Upon the entire route they would be a slow-moving target for the enemy. It was therefore decided to abandon the expedition. Accordingly, they fell rapidly down the river, with the intention of returning to Nashville by water, for it was at once discovered that two of the men were badly wounded. One of them, Hugh Rogan, had been shot entirely through the lungs; another had received a bullet in his brain, and his wound soon proved to be mortal. He was seated in the bow of the boat, spearing fish with a sharpened cane when he received the shot, and he continued in the same position, spearing imaginary fish, and showing no sign of mortal hurt, till his limbs suddenly relaxed, and he fell forward lifeless. No doubt this was a phase of "unconscious cerebration," in which the ideas that were passing through his mind at the moment he was shot continued to act and control his muscles when he no longer consciously directed his movements. The way home by water was long and toilsome, while the distance overland did not exceed a hundred miles; but the officers thought the land route could not be taken with the wounded Rogan. Rogan, however, was of a contrary opinion; and, shot through the lungs as he was, he actually marched the whole of the way, carrying his gun and accoutrements!



In a report of the expedition which Robertson at once forwarded to the Governor of North Carolina, he said: "From the constant incursions of the Indians, I have been obliged to keep the militia very much in service on scouts, guards, etc., and have been under the necessity of promising them pay. I hope you will approve the promise I have made the inhabitants. I have not an opportunity of seeing Colonel Bledsoe, or I make no doubt he would join me in informing your Excellency that our situation at present is deplorable. Deprived of raising subsistence, and constantly harassed with performing military duty, our only hope is in the troops promised us by the General Assembly; but as yet we have no news of them. I earnestly beg your Excellency to forward them with all possible expedition." In closing his report Robertson said: "We were piloted by two Chickasaws in this expedition. Their nation seem on every occasion our friends, and, if it were possible to supply them with trade at the Chickasaw Bluff, there is no doubt but they and the Choctaws would find full employment for our enemies."

Very few of the promised troops arrived, and the "trade"—guns and ammunition—was not furnished to the friendly Chickasaws; in other words, Robertson was left, as he had been from the first, to his own resources. In these circumstances, desperate as the attempt would be, he decided to follow up his raid upon the Creeks by a like assault upon the Chickamaugas. Gathering a con-

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siderably larger force, he set out upon the expedition; but before he had reached the savage stronghold he was met by a delegation from the Indians, who made such promises of peace and good behavior that he was induced to march his men back to the Cumberland.

## CHAPTER V.

### DARK DAYS UPON THE CUMBERLAND.

THE raid upon Coldwater, though it inflicted no material damage upon the Creeks, was of service to Robertson in disclosing the route by which the savages approached the settlements. The captured guns and ammunition also afforded positive evidence of the alliance between the Indians and the Spaniards. He saw now that he had a long and bitter war before him, and he made such preparations to meet it as were possible in the circumstances. He sent out several expeditions under Captain Rains to scour the forests in the direction of the Elk and Tennessee Rivers, and that vigilant officer never returned without having inflicted severe punishment upon some marauding band on its way to the Cumberland.

But, when one route was closed against the Indians, they took another, and soon they were again upon every by-path and around every station in the settlements. They seldom appeared in considerable numbers ; but parties of four or five would conceal themselves in the canebrakes, or amid some clump of trees, and lie in

wait for the settler when he went out to his work in the field, or to a spring for a bucket of water. Now and then larger bodies would boldly approach a station, and, discharging their guns upon it, would suddenly retreat, as if to get out of range of the settler's rifle, but in reality to draw him off into an ambushade. Often at about daybreak they waylaid the gates of the forts, to fire upon the first person who should appear in the morning. No one was safe at any hour of the day or night, and neither sex nor age was spared. A moment's exposure brought upon the settler the merciless tomahawk and scalping-knife. If the savages had combined their forces in concentrated assaults upon the various stations in succession, instead of dissipating their strength in numberless attacks at the same moment, it is not easy to conceive how the feeble settlements could have escaped extermination.

McGillivray seems to have tired at last of this guerilla warfare, which proved more destructive to his own warriors than to the whites; for, when it had gone on about two years, word came to Robertson from the Chickasaws that in a grand council the Creeks had determined upon a final and overwhelming effort to crush the Cumberland colony. Robertson was short of ammunition, and totally unprepared for such an onslaught. At once he applied to North Carolina for aid; but Governor Caswell answered that it was impossible to render him any. Then he made a trip into Kentucky, and the settlers there promised to come to his

help as soon as they had harvested their crops. That Robertson feared would be too late, and, consulting with Anthony Bledsoe, he decided to apply to Sevier. Sevier had been the first thought of both, but they knew that he was then "hunted like a partridge upon the mountains." His own affairs seemed enough to engross his attention; but the emergency was so pressing that Robertson no longer hesitated to ask his assistance. Accordingly, he wrote to Sevier as follows :

"NASHVILLE, August 1, 1787.

"SIR : By accounts from the Chickasaws, we are informed that, at a grand council held by the Creeks, it was determined by that whole nation, to do their utmost this fall to *cut off this country* ; and we expect the Cherokees have joined them. Every circumstance seems to confirm this. . . .

"The people are drawing together in large stations, and doing everything possible for their defense. But I fear, without some timely assistance, we shall chiefly fall a sacrifice. Ammunition is very scarce ; and a Chickasaw now here tells us they imagine they will reduce our stations by *killing all our cattle, and starving us out*.

"We expect from every account that they are now on their way to this country to the number of a thousand. I beg you to use your influence to relieve us ; which I think might be done by fixing a station near the mouth of the Elk, if possible, or by marching a body of men

into the Cherokee nation. Relieve us in any manner you may judge beneficial. We hope our brethren will not suffer us to be massacred by the savages, without giving us any assistance; and I candidly assure you there never was a time in which I imagined ourselves in more danger. . . .

"Kentucky being nearest, we have applied there for assistance, but fear we shall find none in time. Could you now give us any? The people here will never forget those who are their friends in a time of such imminent danger. . . . I hope that no diversion will prevent you from endeavoring to give us relief, which will be ever gratefully remembered by the inhabitants of Cumberland,

"And your most obedient humble servant,

"JAMES ROBERTSON."

At about the same time Anthony Bledsoe wrote to Sevier, and his letter is here given in full, as it affords a vivid picture of the situation. It was as follows:

"SUMNER COUNTY, *August 5, 1787.*

"DEAR SIR: When I had last the pleasure of seeing your Excellency, I think you were kind enough to propose that, in case the perfidious Chickamaugas should infest this country, to notify your Excellency, and you would send a campaign against them without delay. The period has arrived that they, as I have good reason to believe, in combination with the Creeks, have done



this country very great spoil by murdering numbers of our peaceful inhabitants, stealing our horses, killing our cattle, and burning our buildings ; through wantonness cutting down our corn, etc.

“I am well assured that the distress of the Chickamauga towns is the only way this defenseless country will have rest ; the militia being very few, and the whole country a frontier, its inhabitants all shut up in stations, and they, in general, so weakly manned that, in case of an invasion, one is scarcely able to aid another—and the enemy in our country daily committing ravages of one kind or another, and that of the most savage kind. Poor Major Hall and his eldest son fell a sacrifice to their savage cruelty two days ago, near Bledsoe’s Lick. They have killed about twenty-four persons *in this county* in a few months, besides numbers of others in settlements near it.

“Our dependence is much that your Excellency will revenge the blood thus wantonly shed.

“Your obedient servant,

“ANTHONY BLEDSOE.”

Sevier’s answer to these two letters has not been preserved, but it is known that he at once called for volunteers to fill up the battalion of Major Evans to the three hundred which the North Carolina Legislature had assigned for the protection of the Cumberland settlements—which battalion had never numbered above fifty, owing to the disinclination of the men east of the mount-

ains to fighting Indians on meager rations of wild land, leather breeches, and parched corn at a valuation of four shillings per bushel. But the "tall Watauga boys" were deterred by no such considerations. They sprang up, ready armed, at the call of Sevier, and they asked no questions about pay, or the condition of the commissary department. Thus it was that in a very few days upward of two hundred of them, with an abundance of ammunition, were marching over the Cumberland Mountains to the re-enforcement of Evans.

This done, Sevier dispatched four hundred men to the mouth of Elk River, as had been suggested by Robertson. Stationed there, between the Chickamauga towns and the Creek crossing at Coldwater, this force would hold the Creeks in check until Sevier and the Governor of Georgia should muster an army adequate to an attack upon both nations. That Sevier did this will be seen from the following letter which he dispatched to Governor Matthews :

"MOUNT PLEASANT, FRANKLIN, *August 30, 1787.*

"SIR : I had the honor to receive your favor of the 9th inst. by the express. . . . I have inclosed your Excellency copies of two letters from Colonels Robertson and Bledsoe, of Cumberland, wherein you will be informed of the many murders and ravages committed in that country by the Creeks. It is our duty, and highly requisite, in my opinion, that such lawless tribes be reduced to reason by dint of the sword. . . .

“I am very sensible that few of our governments are in a fit capacity for such an undertaking, and ours perhaps far less than any other; but, nevertheless, be assured that we will encounter every difficulty to raise a formidable force to act in conjunction with the army of your State in case of a campaign. . . .

“Our Assembly sat but a few days. The only business of importance done was the making a provision for the defense of our frontier, by raising four hundred men, which is nearly completed. They are to be stationed in the vicinity of Chickamauga, and in case of actual operations against the Creeks this number will be [at once] ready.”

At this very time Sevier was concerting with Governor Matthews for a combined attack upon the Creeks, with a force of three thousand, one half of which he had agreed to furnish. The attack was not made, because of the appointment by Congress in October, 1787, of commissioners to treat with that nation. Sevier, however, soon called for a larger body of volunteers, and descended with fire and sword upon the Chickamaugas, thus diverting them, for a time, from their raids upon Robertson.

To appreciate these efforts of Sevier for the relief of the Cumberland settlers, it needs to be considered that—there being no funds in the Franklin treasury—his troops had to be equipped at his personal cost, and that he was now under the ban of outlawry by the authorities of North Carolina, who soon afterward kid-

napped and conveyed him over the mountains to be tried for high-treason. Thus aid to Robertson came, not from the State which owed his people protection, but from the hounded and badgered man to whom that State was indebted for its very existence !

The sudden appearance of Sevier's men in the Chickamauga country must have been regarded by McGillivray as the advance of a larger body ; for he prudently kept his warriors at home to defend their own wigwams. The timely re-enforcement put Robertson in a much better posture for defense, and he further augmented his effective strength by using the authority given him by the Legislature to call into service the new settlers who had come in under the escort of the troops. His whole force he organized into scouting-parties, which, under experienced leaders, he sent out to scour the country in all directions. It was the practice of the Indians to enter the settlements in considerable numbers, but then to separate into small bodies, and make their camps near the buffalo-trails, or the crossings of streams, in the vicinity of the stations ; but now it became extremely hazardous for any considerable number to come within fifty miles of any of the settlements. The ground throughout the forests was everywhere covered with a deep layer of leaves, over which a trail could be distinctly followed ; and to escape the scouting-parties the Indians were now obliged to break into bodies of not more than half a dozen, and to keep generally to the beds of creeks, or the hard-beaten paths of the buffalo where their foot-

prints would not betray them. Here they were searched for, and waylaid by the sagacious woodsmen, and here many a savage left his bones, far away from the burial-ground of his nation.

Still, the sleepless vigilance of the scouts did not altogether save the settlements from the devastations of the Indians. If a farm-house were for a moment left unguarded, or a fort weakly defended, there echoed about it the war-whoop, and the hapless settler was forced to encounter the tomahawk and scalping-knife of his savage enemy. Murders and depredations continued till far into the autumn ; but, in consequence of the recent re-enforcements, the very existence of the settlements no longer depended upon the presence of Robertson, therefore he took his accustomed seat at the session of the North Carolina Legislature in October. He soon addressed some plain words to that body, which, after his custom, he put into the form of a memorial. The address stated that the inhabitants of the Western country were greatly distressed by the constant war that was waged against them by the Creeks, Cherokees, and some of the Western Indians ; it pictured the deplorable condition of the settlers, their crops and cattle destroyed, and their lives in danger whenever they lost sight of a fort or stockade ; and it added : "These counties have been settled at great expense and personal danger to ourselves and our constituents ; and by such settlement the adjacent lands have greatly increased in value, by which means the State has been enabled to sink a considerable



part of its domestic debt. We and our constituents have cheerfully endured almost unconquerable difficulties in settling the Western country, in full confidence that we should be enabled to send our produce to market through the rivers which water the country; but we have the mortification, not only to be excluded from that channel of commerce by a foreign nation, but the Indians are rendered more hostile through the influence of that very nation, probably with a view to drive us from the country, as they claim the whole of the soil. We call upon the humanity and justice of the State to prevent any further massacres and depredations of ourselves and our constituents, and we claim from the Legislature that protection of life and property which is due to every citizen. We recommend, as the most safe and convenient means of relief, the adoption by the Legislature of the resolves of Congress of the 26th of October last. This relief, we trust, will not be refused, especially as the United States are pleased to interest themselves on this occasion, and are willing to bear the expense."

The resolves of Congress alluded to were a recommendation of that body to all the States holding Western lands to cede the same to the General Government, for the creation of a fund for the payment of the national debt. The new Constitution had been framed only a few weeks before, and its adoption by the States was as yet uncertain; therefore, Robertson and his constituents were committing themselves to an unknown contin-



gency, and, at the best, submitting to the control of a distant power which had no knowledge of their situation and necessities. All this they realized, but any change, they thought, would be an improvement on the parsimonious rule of North Carolina.

The memorial was respectfully received, and, after a long discussion, the settlers were fully authorized—to take care of themselves. An act was passed empowering them to adopt all offensive and defensive measures that might be necessary to their security, “provided always” that they should make no claim, and impose no charge, upon the State treasury. This much accomplished, Robertson returned to his constituents.

The bloody work had continued in his absence. Evans and Rains, and the two Bledsoes, had been constantly in the saddle ; but the experienced Indian fighters furnished by Sevier had been able, in numberless small engagements, to put to rout and drive off the savages. The Indians now never appeared except about the more exposed forts and farm-houses ; but they still infested the settlements, and reports again came from the Chickasaws that the Creeks were still contemplating a raid in such numbers as to sweep the settlers beyond the Alleghanies. If he could but have guns and ammunition, Piomingo would march with them to exterminate that pestiferous nation.

But arms could not be had. North Carolina would not furnish them, and they could not be procured elsewhere, because there was no money among the settlers.

Peltries and produce they had in abundance, but, the Mississippi being closed against them by the Spaniards, by no means could they be got to market. In these circumstances Robertson decided to resort to diplomacy with the Creeks and Spaniards. He had an utter abhorrence of both those nations. He once said: "The Spaniards are inspired by the devil; the Creeks by the devil and the Spaniards; and the worst devil in human form is the Creek chief, McGillivray." During his recent visit into Kentucky he had met General James Wilkinson, who had told him that he thought the Spaniards would open the Mississippi, and desist from inciting the Indians to hostilities, if they were assured that the settlers could be attached to the Spanish interest. Dissatisfaction, he said, with the older States was general throughout Kentucky and Tennessee. Of this the Spaniards were well aware, and they could doubtless be led to adopt a conciliatory policy toward the settlers if they had hope to thereby detach the Western country from the Union. Having turned the thought over in his mind, Robertson now acted on this hint from the wily Wilkinson. The settlers had given the Creeks no cause for hostility. They had not encroached upon their territory, nor made war upon them except in defense of their own firesides. If other proof had been wanting, this made it evident that their murderous raids were instigated by the Spaniards. Robertson had corresponded with Miro, the Spanish Governor of Louisiana, and, to secure his good-will,

had even named the Cumberland district in his honor. In return he had received from Miro the most friendly professions, but no cessation of hostilities. He now decided to address McGillivray, whom he regarded as the most potent agent of Spanish hostility. This he thought might lead to such negotiation as would result in a suspension of hostilities. Accordingly, early in March, 1788, in connection with Anthony Bledsoe, he addressed to McGillivray a letter inquiring the reason of the continued raids of the Creeks upon the settlements.

This letter Robertson dispatched by two special messengers, James Hoggatt and Andrew Ewing, Clerk of the County Court, who in delivering it had to make a horseback-journey of more than five hundred miles through a forest infested with hostile savages. But they went and came in safety, and were received with courtesy by the Creek chieftain. In his reply McGillivray admitted that he had waged war upon the Americans for several years past ; but stated that he had made up his mind to peace, when he was provoked to renewed hostilities by the affair at Muscle Shoals, in which several of his tribe had been killed ; and he added : "These men belonged to different towns, and had connections of the first consequence in the nation. Such an unprovoked outrage raised a most violent clamor, and gave rise to the expedition against Cumberland which soon after took place. But, as that affair has been since amply retaliated, I now, once again, will use my best endeavors to bring about a peace between us. Indeed, before I re-

ceived your dispatches I had given out strict orders that, on the return of all hunting-parties, none should go out, on any pretense, until the first general meeting, which I expect to hold in May next, when all my influence and authority will be exerted in the manner you wish. . . . As I abhor every species of duplicity, I wish not to deceive. If I were not decided in settling and terminating the war, I would not now write."

The comment on these peaceable professions of McGillivray was the cold-blooded murder by some of his myrmidons of a young son of Robertson, in broad day, and within scarcely more than a stone's-throw of his father's dwelling! The murder was committed on the eve of the return of the messengers, and the scalped and mangled remains of his son were still unburied when Robertson read this letter of the Creek chieftain. But, mastering his grief, he replied to McGillivray in terms of courtesy. He had not expected, he said, to be blamed for his recent expedition against the Indians below the Muscle Shoals. They were known to be a lawless banditti, subject to the regulations of no nation whatever. He had been recently subjected to the agony of seeing one of his own children inhumanly massacred—a shock which almost conquered the fortitude that, from his earliest youth, he had endeavored to use as a shield against the calamities of life. He had on numberless occasions shown a friendly disposition toward the Creeks and Cherokees, and he besought McGillivray to restrain and punish the refractory part of his nation, as the only

means of securing peaceful relations. Here his feelings as a man seem to have overcome him, and with a pathos that is touching in its simplicity he added: "It is a matter of no reflection to a brave man to see a father, a son, or a brother, fall in the field of action. But it is a serious and melancholy incident to see a helpless woman or an innocent child tomahawked in their own houses."

To this letter McGillivray replied in a most friendly tone. "He had already," he said, "endeavored to restrain the Chickamauga chiefs, Little Turkey and Bloody Fellow, from further hostilities, and he should persist in measures that would keep his own warriors from again molesting the Cumberland settlers." But this pacific missive, like his previous letter, had a bloody commentary.

Next to Robertson, Colonel Anthony Bledsoe was the most valuable member of the Cumberland community. He was an educated man, of cool courage, sound judgment, and wide experience in public affairs, having held various civil and military positions of importance in the older settlements. His relations with Sevier, Governor Caswell, and other prominent men were of an intimate character, but for many years he had been the bosom friend and trusted counselor of Robertson, who, since Bledsoe's arrival on the Cumberland, had acted in no affair of importance without his advice and co-operation. In the event of Robertson's death, he was probably the only man in the settlement who could have brought it



safely out of the fiery ordeal through which it was passing. He had settled about thirty-five miles from Nashville, at a place now called Castalian Springs, where he had a large landed property, but during the recent raids he had for greater security removed his family to the station of his brother Isaac, about three miles distant from his own. The stockade was of the ordinary construction, having at one of its corners a double cabin, occupied one half by his own, the other by his brother's family. In this station on the night of the 20th of July, 1788, were the two Bledsoes, an Irishman named Campbell, the colonel's body-servant, a Mr. Clendenning, William Hall, the father of a subsequent Governor of Tennessee, and Hugh Rogan, who had but recently recovered from the wound through the lungs which he received on the Coldwater expedition. Suddenly about midnight all in the building were roused from sleep by the rapid passage of a body of horsemen through the lane in front of the station. Colonel Bledsoe at once arose, and, with his body-servant Campbell, went out to ascertain the cause of the disturbance. He incautiously unfastened the gate, and as he did so a volley was fired which brought him to the ground, and instantly killed his body-servant. Bledsoe was taken up, carried into the house, and laid upon a bed, while Hall, Rogan, and Clendenning, manned the port-holes in expectation of an attack from the savages. No attack followed, but it was soon discovered that Colonel Bledsoe was mortally wounded, and could live but a few hours. Then occurred one of



those instances of heroism which were so common among these settlers. Bledsoe had two sons and several daughters, and, by the North Carolina laws of the period, only male heirs inherited the real estate of an intestate. He desired to make a will to protect the interest of his daughters; but it was discovered that there was no fire, nor any means of striking a light, on the premises. Then Hugh Rogan volunteered to go for a light to a neighboring station. This he did, and returned safely with a burning brand in his hand, though he had to run the gantlet of not less than fifty savages.

With this grief, and the loss of his son fresh upon him, Robertson called his confidential friends together to confer upon the answer to be given to McGillivray. He was a man of heroic mind, and of a fortitude rarely equaled; but now his human heart was sorely tried, his manly nature rudely shaken. As the twofold calamity was alluded to at this gathering, and his friends spoke to him words of sympathy and condolence, he answered, in broken sentences: "I could have given up my boy to secure a permanent peace. That should have been enough. I could now give my own life to atone for any wrong we have done the Creeks. But we have done them no wrong. They have waged against us an unprovoked war; and now they have killed our best citizen, and they constantly seek my life."

He uttered no threats—spoke no word of vengeance; but addressed himself, with unselfish thought, to the welfare of the settlements. His answer to McGillivray

was cool, collected, and diplomatic. He was satisfied that the Creek chief was playing him false, but he betrayed no such suspicion. He said :

“SIR : I received your favors by Messrs. Hoggatt and Ewing, which have given great satisfaction. I transmitted copies to Governor Caswell, and have since seen them published in the ‘Kentucky Gazette.’

“The Indians still continue their incursions in some measure, though trifling to what we experienced in the spring. I imagine it must be Cherokees, or some outlying Creeks who are not acquainted with your orders. Colonel Anthony Bledsoe was killed by a small party about two weeks ago.” . . . .

This is all he says about the murder of his nearest friend. Then, with Wilkinson’s suggestion in his mind, he retorts upon McGillivray some of his double-dealing in the following significant paragraph : “In all probability, we can not long remain in our present state, and if the British, or any commercial nation who may possess the mouth of the Mississippi, would furnish us with trade, and receive our produce, there can not be a doubt but that the people west of the Appalachian Mountains will open their eyes to their true interests. I shall be very happy to have your sentiments on these matters.”

Robertson had no positive knowledge of the treaty existing between the Creeks and the Spaniards, but he judged that his letter would be promptly forwarded to

the Spanish Governor at New Orleans. In this he was not mistaken. But in the same dispatch in which he inclosed Robertson's letter to the Spanish Governor, McGillivray asked for additional arms and ammunition that he might continue an unflagging war upon the Cumberland settlers! This fact McGillivray's correspondence, published in recent years, fully discloses.

In reference to these overtures of Robertson, Haywood, the early historian of Tennessee, remarks: "Sometimes the leaders of our unprotected settlers, pretending esteem for their officers, and a wish to be under their government, would procure an abatement of the horrors of war. But liberty to these settlers was of more value than all the benefits the Spaniards had it in their power to bestow. And though leaders might, in calamitous times and circumstances, think proper to temporize, they could never entertain the serious wish to coalesce with them. All the wealth of the Spaniards could not bear comparison with the single article of liberty."

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SPANISH COMPLICATION.

To understand the subsequent history of the colony under Robertson, it is necessary to now take a wider view of affairs west of the Alleghanies. The settlers on the Cumberland were merely the advance of a far larger body that, since 1770, had been climbing the mountains and overspreading the territory which now comprises the States of Tennessee and Kentucky. The population of this extensive region, at the date to which this history has now arrived (1788), can not be stated with accuracy, but it was probably not far from eighty thousand. In 1790, by actual census, it numbered 109,368—much the larger portion (73,677) being included within the district of Kentucky. Though under the rule of two States, which pursued toward their over-mountain citizens a totally opposite policy, the settlers in the northern and southern sections of this territory were, to all intents and purposes, one people. They were exposed to the same dangers, bound together by common interests, and affected in a similar manner by

the complications which soon after the Revolution arose between the United States and Spain, in regard to the navigation of the Mississippi. The danger by which they were mutually threatened arose from the hostility of the savages; the principal interest they had in common was the opening of an avenue for their commerce to the markets of the world.

It is not known what success attended McGillivray's effort to combine the Northern tribes in an attack upon the Kentucky settlements. It is probable that it was so far successful that those Indians agreed to come into the coalition, and planned a gigantic raid upon Kentucky, for in the autumn of 1784 it was reported everywhere in the district that, in connection with the Cherokees, they were about to descend upon it in overpowering numbers. The alarm was so general that Colonel Benjamin Logan called a convention of citizens to meet at Danville, to concert measures for anticipating the attack by carrying the war into the enemy's country.

The convention met, but soon discovered that no legal authority existed in the district which could call out the militia for offensive operations. This, together with the fact that there was no magazine of arms in the country, nor any public funds that could be applied to the purchase of war material, was seen to place the settlers largely at the mercy of the savages. The State government had already complained of Western expenditures. In case the citizens should arm and equip themselves, might not Virginia refuse to reimburse the ex-

penditure, and "even to compensate for real losses"? At an earlier day, when their very existence had been at stake, every man had sprung spontaneously to the defense of the community; but now, when they were so strong in numbers as to be free from danger of extermination, some legal organization was needed to raise money for war purposes, enforce military duty upon the reluctant, and conduct offensive operations—the only ones which experience had shown to be efficient in the warding off of savage aggression. The State administration was well disposed, but it was at too great a distance to act promptly in sudden emergencies. An efficient home government was absolutely necessary to the well-being and safety of the district. This was the universal sentiment, and it led the assemblage to issue a call for a convention to meet at Danville in the ensuing December, to take into consideration the expediency of "a separation of the district from the parent Commonwealth, and its erection into an equal and independent member of the American confederacy." This was the first step taken by Kentucky toward a separate existence, and then began an agitation which during several years had a most unhappy effect upon the entire Western country.

Not being able to initiate offensive operations, the district took the best defensive measures that were possible in the circumstances; but for some unexplained reason the Northern Indians refrained from any general attack upon Kentucky. They confined themselves to a desultory warfare—descending in small bodies upon iso-



lated farm-houses or exposed positions, and waylaying unprotected immigrants as they were moving down the Ohio. In this manner, says Judge Innis, in a letter to Henry Knox, Secretary of War, of date July 7, 1790, "from November, 1783, to the time of writing, fifteen hundred souls have been killed in the district and emigrating to it, upward of twenty thousand horses have been taken and carried off, and other property to the amount of at least fifteen thousand pounds." \* Such a warfare was sufficiently grievous, but it did not, like that waged against the Cumberland settlements, endanger the very existence of the community. More severely felt was the hostile policy of Spain, which closed the Mississippi to Western commerce.

The border settlers were altogether an agricultural people, and dependent upon the sale of their productions for the tea, coffee, and other articles of luxury they had been accustomed to in the older settlements. But a wide wilderness, infested by hostile Indians, separated them from the frontier settlements of Virginia and Pennsylvania. The shortest route to Staunton was five hundred miles, and it could be traveled only by a well-mounted horseman. Extensive exchanges over the mountains were therefore impossible. The lighter kinds of merchandise could be brought by that route on pack-horses, and the heavier descriptions hauled by wagons to Pittsburg, and thence floated on keel-boats

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\* Quoted in Butler's "History of Kentucky," p. 195.

down the Ohio ; but the trip consumed several months, and the transit was so expensive as to place all imported goods beyond the means of any but the wealthier part of the population. The natural thoroughfare for both outgo and supply was the Mississippi River.

The closing of that river by the Spaniards, which thus shut the Western people out from the markets of the world, was not at first of serious moment, because the fast-incoming settlers readily consumed the surplus grain that was raised ; but when tobacco began to be grown, and the new-comers became themselves grain-producers, it was universally seen that its free navigation was an absolute necessity to the whole Western country.

In the treaty of peace of 1783 was a secret article which stipulated that, in case Great Britain should acquire West Florida, the southern boundary of the United States should be extended so as to include that province, which was the acknowledged possession of Spain. This stipulation soon became known at Madrid, and, stung with indignation at this parceling out of his dominions, and already resolved upon the policy of extermination suggested by McGillivray, the Spanish king lost no time in dispatching a message across the ocean, informing Congress that until Spain should admit that the boundary between her possessions and the United States was correctly described in the English treaty, she should assert her claim to the sole navigation of the Mississippi, and should exclude all American vessels from its waters.

Prior to this, Congress had directed its attention to commercial intercourse with foreign nations, and, on receipt of the Spanish message, it promptly appointed John Jay, then Secretary of State, a special envoy to Madrid, to conclude a commercial treaty, but instructed him not to relinquish, in any negotiation, the right of navigating the Mississippi from its source to the ocean. Jay did not at once set out on the mission, and, before he could sail, Don Diego Gardoqui arrived in this country, with full authority from Spain to treat upon the subject. This allowed the negotiation to be conducted at home, under the very eye of Congress.

Gardoqui presented his credentials on the 2d of July, 1785, but before that time the pretensions of Spain were fully understood in the Western country, and the settlers had experienced the effects of her exclusive policy. Their produce was already a drug for want of a market. Pork and flour were selling at one dollar and a half per hundred, corn at ten cents a bushel, while tobacco was rotting on the ground, with no buyers whatever. A majority of the settlers knew nothing of international law, and they stood in no awe of a power which to their eyes was represented by a few log huts at Natchez and St. Louis, and a mongrel population of less than five thousand near the mouth of the Mississippi.\* They

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\* The population of New Orleans in 1785 was 4,980; and that of the entire district of Louisiana, 31,433. About one half were negro slaves, the remainder French, Spaniards, and half-breeds.

had, they thought, a natural right to navigate the water that flowed in front of their own doorways, and that right they should assert in defiance of Spain and Eastern diplomacy. This was the general feeling among the mass of the people ; and one Thomas Amis, more bold or more reckless than the rest, seems to have determined to put the Spanish pretensions to the test of experiment. He had produce which was needed by the Spaniards, and he was confident that a profitable trade could be opened with their settlements along the river. Accordingly, he freighted a flat-boat with flour and other merchandise, and set out on his way down the Mississippi. He encountered no obstacle till he came abreast of the fort on the high bluffs of Natchez, but there he was unceremoniously brought to, his boat and cargo confiscated, and he, as a special act of mercy, released from arrest, and allowed to proceed afoot through the woods to Kentucky.

The way was long, and several months elapsed before Amis reached his home on the Ohio. Everywhere he went he told his story, and everywhere he found sympathizing listeners. With the marvelous speed at which news travels in sections destitute of mail facilities, his tale spread over the whole Western country, arousing everywhere the most intense indignation. And on the heels of it came tidings that Congress had concluded a treaty with Spain which would close the Mississippi for twenty-five years to Western commerce ! The report was not true ; but it was so near the truth as the fact that such a treaty had lacked

only the vote of two States to secure its confirmation.

The Spanish envoy had opened the negotiation with Mr. Jay by the explicit declaration that his master, the king, would not consent that the United States or any foreign power should navigate the Mississippi below the thirty-first parallel. To this Mr. Jay had replied that "the adjacent country was fast filling with people, and that the time must soon come when they would not submit to seeing a fine river flow before their doors without using it as a highway to the sea for the transportation of their productions";\* and he represented the wisdom of forming such a treaty as would avoid all causes of future discord. To these appeals Gardoqui was deaf, for he had distinct instructions, and doubtless knew the secret intentions of his government. But, the navigation being waived, he announced his readiness to form a commercial treaty that would be highly advantageous to the United States—would open Spanish ports to their commerce, and bring in an unlimited amount of gold and silver in exchange for American productions. It was clear to Mr. Jay that such a treaty would vastly benefit the seaboard States, and improve the financial condition of the entire country. A large proportion of the evils it suffered were owing to a decayed and languishing commerce, and these would be removed by the proposed treaty, which could be made at the mere cost of shutting

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\* Pitkin's "History of the United States," 1828.



up for a few years a river that was practically useless to a sparsely-settled, agricultural people.

Convinced at last that he could not move the Spanish envoy from his position, Jay, influenced by these views, went to Congress with a request that the resolution which insisted upon the free navigation of the Mississippi should be rescinded, and he be allowed to conclude a treaty on the basis proposed by the Spaniards. In support of this request he urged that the navigation was not then important, and probably would not be for twenty-five or thirty years. A forbearance to use it was, therefore, no great hardship. The right could be acquired only by a war with Spain, in which, no doubt, France would join her ally. For such a war the country was not prepared. The operation of the treaty could be limited to twenty-five years, when the United States would be strong enough to assert its rights. In accordance with Jay's request, a resolution was submitted to Congress repealing the previous instructions, and authorizing him to conclude a treaty waiving the question of right of navigation for twenty years. In support of the resolution New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and the four New England States, voted unanimously; the Southern States opposing it with equal unanimity. It failed to pass by only two votes.

This occurred in secret session; but the fact soon became publicly known, and the report of it reached the West in the exaggerated form that has been mentioned, creating wide-spread indignation. It served to increase



the general dissatisfaction already existing against the Federal Government in consequence of the treaty of Hopewell, by which the United States had relinquished to the Indians a broad territory south of the French Broad River, and authorized them to forcibly remove some three thousand settlers from lands which had been acquired by fair purchase from the same Indians. "By such meddling," it was said, "the United States merely aggravates the evils of our position. We have a right to look to the General Government for protection from the savages, but it has increased their hostility; and now it would inclose us with a Chinese wall—shut us out from the markets of the world, merely to swell the already plethoric pockets of the ruffle-shirted gentry on the sea-board." This was the language now heard in every hut and every hamlet from the Watauga and Cumberland to the remotest district in Kentucky. Public meetings were everywhere held, strongly reprobating the proposed treaty, and denouncing it as "cruel, oppressive, and unjust." A document of the period gave voice to the general feeling as follows: "The prohibition of the navigation of the Mississippi has astonished the whole Western country. To *sell* us, and to make us vassals to the merciless Spaniards, is a grievance not to be borne."

The public excitement invaded even the General Assembly of Virginia, which promptly passed resolutions asserting that "the common right of navigating the Mississippi is the bountiful gift of Nature to the United

States"; and "the Confederacy, having been formed on the broad basis of equal rights in every part thereof, and confided to the protection and guardianship of the whole, a sacrifice of the rights of any one part to the supposed or real interest of another part would be a flagrant violation of justice, and a direct contravention of the end for which the Federal Government was instituted, and an alarming innovation on the system of the Union." Any such action would provoke "the just resentment and reproaches of our Western brethren, whose essential rights and interests would be thereby sacrificed and sold," and it would tend "to undermine our repose, our prosperity, and our Union itself."

Congress had failed to give any protection to the Western country; North Carolina was acting in direct hostility to her border counties; and, with all her friendliness, Virginia, owing to distance, was unable to respond as promptly as the exigency often required to the reasonable demands of Kentucky. In these circumstances there had grown up a conviction with many leading men that both convenience and safety required that the West should assume an independent existence, either as a separate State or an independent Commonwealth. That this last was now openly avowed and discussed among them may be inferred from some expressions in a letter written about this time by the Attorney-General of Kentucky to the President of Congress. "I am decidedly of opinion," he writes, "that this Western country will in a few years act for itself, and erect an *independent*

government ; for, under the present system, we can not exert our strength, neither does Congress seem disposed to protect us." Nothing more would appear to have been needed to lead the West to some such action than the disclosure which the vote on the Jay resolution had afforded of the feeling of the majority of Congress ; and no more favorable circumstances could be conceived of for an ambitious man, unscrupulous as to means, and unrestrained by love of his country, to put himself at the head of a movement to swing the West from the Union, and erect it into an independent republic. Unfortunately, there was such a man among the settlers in Kentucky, and he now addressed himself to that object with consummate ability. To further the project, he encouraged Spain to persist in the occlusion of the Mississippi ; and he thereby entailed upon the entire West long-continued suffering, and upon the devoted colony along the Cumberland ten more years of most savage warfare. It therefore becomes necessary to give some account of him and his machinations in this history.

The influence of this man on Western affairs was so potent that, according to one of its historians, his arrival there constituted "an era in the history of Kentucky,"\* but it was an "era" pregnant with peril to the West. His name was James Wilkinson, and for a month or two he had held the rank of brevet brigadier in the army of

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\* Mann Butler, "History," p. 143.

the Revolution. From this fact he had come to be usually addressed as General Wilkinson. He made his first appearance in Kentucky in February, 1784, and establishing himself at Lexington, engaged at once in commercial operations. Humphrey Marshall, who was his near neighbor, and knew him intimately well, writes of him: "The presence, the manners, and conversation of this gentleman were calculated to attract attention, excite curiosity, and produce interest. . . . He had been an officer in the regular army, was at the taking of Burgoyne, and lately a member of the Pennsylvania Legislature. Besides these circumstances—so well adapted to prepossess the feelings, play upon the imaginations, and captivate the hearts of the simple and rustic Kentuckians—Nature herself had gratuitously furnished Wilkinson with a passport which insured his favorable reception wherever he was seen and heard—a passport expressed in a language which all mankind could read, whose influence every one felt, and which none would suspect, or scrutinize on the first perusal. A person not tall enough to be perfectly elegant, was compensated by its symmetry, and appearance of health and strength; a countenance open, mild, capacious, and beaming with intelligence; a gait firm, manly, and facile; manners bland, accommodating, and popular; an address easy, polite, and gracious, invited approach, gave access, assured attention, cordiality, and ease. By these fair forms he conciliated; by these he captivated. The combined effect was greatly advantageous to the general, on a first

acquaintance—which a further intercourse contributed to modify.”\*

The distrust which is intimated in the last sentence might have been more generally felt had Wilkinson's history been better known among the Kentuckians. He was a native of the little town of Benedict, in Maryland, and at the age of eighteen had just completed his studies for the medical profession when tidings reached him of the battle of Bunker Hill. Without delay he abandoned his home, and, proceeding to the camp at Cambridge, Massachusetts, enlisted as a private in the army under Washington. On the remains of a slender patrimony he was able to indulge in a style of living not common to private soldiers, and this, with a plausible address and unbounded audacity, probably accounts for the fact that he was soon admitted to the tables of subordinate officers, and speedily contracted a close intimacy with Captain Aaron Burr and Colonel Benedict Arnold. In September, 1775, he obtained a captain's commission, and joined Arnold on his ill-starred expedition into Canada. Serving with credit in this campaign, he was advanced to the rank of major, and, in June, 1776, appointed to the staff of General Gates. He soon acquired the confidence of that officer, who in the following December made him the bearer of an important dispatch to General Charles Lee, then encamped near Morristown, New Jersey. Here

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\* “History of Kentucky,” by H. Marshall, vol. i, p. 165.



he was the unobserved spectator of Lee's capture by a small party of British, who suddenly surrounded his quarters. He has graphically described this incident in his "Memoirs," according to which, with a pistol in each hand, he took up a position approachable by only one person at a time, determined to shoot down his first assailants, and to use his sword upon the remainder. His valor, however, was not put to the test, for, Lee having surrendered at a second summons, the British rode away, leaving the smaller game unmolested. In Wilkinson's "Memoirs" he expresses the opinion that it was then Lee's intention to anticipate Washington in breaking the British lines between New York and the Delaware. Had Lee done this, he might have been elevated to the chief command—a calamity which, perhaps, the country escaped in consequence of his capture.

Rejoining Gates, Wilkinson was promoted to a colonelcy, and appointed adjutant-general. In this capacity he was at the battle of Bemis's Heights on September 19, 1777, and in the more important engagement of October 7th. On the eve of the latter battle he had an opportunity to display the duplicity and treachery which were the distinguishing traits of his subsequent career. Under cover of darkness, Colonel John Hardin, of Kentucky, had penetrated into the British lines, and obtained an accurate idea of their strength and position. At imminent risk to his life he regained the American outposts, and there met Wilkinson, who was making the rounds with some boon companions. Aware of Wilkin-



son's relation to Gates, Hardin confided to him his discoveries, and begged that he would at once make them known to the general. This Wilkinson did, suppressing Hardin's name, and making himself the hero of the midnight adventure. He also embellished his narrative with sundry hand-to-hand encounters and hair-breadth escapes, which Hardin had not experienced. The result was that, when Burgoyne had surrendered, Wilkinson's duplicity was rewarded by his being made bearer of the joyful tidings to Congress, with a recommendation from Gates to that body for his appointment as a brigadier-general.\* Wilkinson was eighteen days on the way to Philadelphia, loitering at every convenient station to laud the greatness of Gates, and the important part he had himself played in the events which led to the surrender; so the news was a week old when he finally delivered his dispatches.

Congress did not at first seem to appreciate the vastness of his services, or to be inclined to act on Gates's recommendation. Chafing under this neglect, Wilkinson wrote to Gates: "I have not been honored with any mark of distinction from Congress. Indeed, should I receive no testimony of their approbation of my conduct I shall not be mortified. My hearty contempt of the world will shield me from such pitiful sensations." The world for which he expressed so much contempt had been known to him for not more than twenty years, and

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\* "The Impartial Review," Nashville, September 13, 1806.

the conduct for which he expected approbation was, principally, his fraudulent assumption of another man's services. After some days a proposal was introduced into Congress to present Wilkinson with a sword, whereupon Dr. Witherspoon, a shrewd Scot, dryly remarked, "I think ye'd better gi'e the lad *a pair of spurs*." This defeated the resolution, but Congress, some weeks subsequently, did appoint him a brigadier-general by brevet, and soon afterward, Secretary of the Board of War, of which Gates was a member.

Wilkinson was at this time deep in the Conway cabal, which proposed to elevate Gates to the chief command of the army; and the discovery of this conspiracy was due to his babbling the secret in a convivial hour to Lord Stirling. His remarks were at once communicated to Washington, who frankly repeated them to Gates and Conway, by whom the disclosures were met, at first with hesitating prevarication, and then with downright falsehood. The result was that Wilkinson was plunged over his depth into hot water. Adroit as he was, he could not explain his treachery to Gates, nor convince Washington that he was not connected with the disreputable conspiracy. He challenged both Gates and Lord Stirling to duels; but that did not remove the distrust with which he was now generally regarded. To add to his discomfort, forty-nine officers of the army petitioned Congress to rescind his appointment as brigadier; and, to avoid that disgrace, he at once resigned his brevet rank of general. He retained his commission as colonel,

but was not again actively employed till toward the close of the war, when he served for a time as clothier-general of the army.

The war over, Wilkinson sought a fresh field for his restless activity in Kentucky. The property he brought with him did not exceed three or four slaves, and a few hundred pounds in money, but on this slender capital he at once embarked in extensive commercial operations. "His bold and sanguine nature refused to be confined to small adventures. His local business was the smallest part of the large and laborious enterprises which he actively supervised. Before the winter of 1786 he had well-nigh engrossed the profitable trade in salt, and combined it with barters for otter and beaver skins that yielded increased gains. His agents were everywhere, and his untiring vigilance kept pace with all their movements and spurred their activity." \*

The fact was not long in disclosing itself to Wilkinson that there was a speedy fortune before him if he could secure the exclusive right to trade with New Orleans. He was satisfied that the Spaniards had other views than a paltry traffic in pork, flour, and tobacco. It was well known throughout the West that they armed and secretly incited the Creeks and Cherokees in their constant attacks upon Robertson, and the motive for their hostility was plain to a man of Wilkinson's pen-

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\* "Centennial Address" of John Mason Brown, Frankfort, Kentucky.

etration. He saw that they hoped to exterminate and drive off the settlers, or, at the least, to prevent their nearer approach to the Mississippi. This indicated their total ignorance of the growing strength and resources of the border people, who were already too strong to be exterminated. If the Spaniards could be convinced of this, might they not be induced to enter into commercial relations with them, and even to form an offensive and defensive alliance in case the trans-Alleghany region should erect itself into an independent republic? It was of the growing power of the United States that Spain was jealous. In that she saw danger to her American possessions; but she would have no such fear of a feeble republic wedged in between the Mississippi and the Alleghanies. And yet, that feeble republic, guided by the genius of Wilkinson, would before many years be strong enough to dictate terms to the Spaniards, and, if need were, to drive them into the Gulf of Mexico. There is abundant evidence that these were the views of Wilkinson when, in 1787, he had the interview with Robertson of which mention has been made in a previous chapter.

But at the outset Wilkinson probably contemplated only such personal relations with the Spaniards as would give him exclusive traffic upon the Mississippi. This he hoped to bring about by the bribery of the Spanish officials, and by impressing them with so exalted an opinion of Western power that they would be convinced of the utter hopelessness of staying the progress of American

emigration to the Mississippi. This was now (1786) Wilkinson's object, and he set about its attainment with a shrewdness that would have been admirable had he been actuated by any but the most sordid personal motives. The ulterior project he might prosecute or abandon, as circumstances should render expedient. In view of the excited state of the Western mind, it is probable that he anticipated no serious opposition to it from the border people.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE TREASON OF WILKINSON.

WILKINSON made his attempt to capture the Spanish trade by gradual and systematic approaches. He first dispatched emissaries down the Mississippi to spread exaggerated reports of the strength of the border settlements, and of his own influence and importance; and then, when time enough had passed to allow these reports to reach New Orleans, and become generally diffused, he followed them up, in the autumn of 1786, by a personal visit to Don Gayoso de Lamos, the Spanish commandant at Natchez. Wilkinson had reason to know that this gentleman was, in many respects, "a man after his own heart." He was vain and pompous, fond of luxury and the pleasures of the table, and also a wasteful spendthrift, overwhelmed with debt, constantly harassed for money, and entirely unscrupulous as to the means he took for its acquisition. But he was easy of access, and of a complaisant disposition; and, as like attracts like, Wilkinson could reasonably count on making him a



serviceable instrument in the promotion of his enterprise.

The reports which Wilkinson had sent before him, represented that he was "a person of the first influence and consequence in Kentucky and the Western country, and that he could command at pleasure an army of ten or fifteen thousand citizens." Gayoso received him with all the consideration due to so potent a personage, and speedily "an understanding of the most intimate character was established between them." This soon grew into a friendship which lasted many years, and was as sincere as any friendship can be between men totally lacking in sincerity. Some details of this interview are reported—among others that, in answer to Gayoso's inquiries, Wilkinson gave him "an account of the resources and population of Kentucky" (probably exaggerated), "and assured him that the inhabitants were in a state of the greatest discontent, bordering even upon insurrection; and that they would cheerfully accept the yoke of any foreign power which would aid them in a separation from the Union." As he was in duty bound, Gayoso transmitted these statements to his superior, Don Miro, the Spanish Governor of Louisiana. This was the result at which Wilkinson had aimed; and he returned to Kentucky feeling that the first step in his great enterprise had been successfully taken. The gain to Gayoso from this visit was "a pair of the most beautiful bay geldings, that Wilkinson bought, for the express purpose, of Colonel Bannister, at Petersburg, Vir-

ginia, which were the next spring forwarded to the Spaniard."\* It was this pair of geldings that opened the Mississippi River to American commerce.

The ferment in Kentucky continued, and was actively encouraged by Wilkinson, who soon became a most energetic declaimer against the supineness of the General Government, and the injustice that the East was ready to inflict upon the West by the Jay treaty. But he was not diverted from his great project of opening a trade with the Spaniards. His was a versatile genius. He could simultaneously pursue half a dozen different objects, and make them all subserve and promote one another. To convey his produce past the guns of Natchez, he had expended a pair of thoroughbreds, and now he decided to risk a larger sum—of his own or some one else's money—in an attempt to open the gates of New Orleans to his commerce. Accordingly, he loaded a flat-boat with Kentucky produce, and set it afloat down the Mississippi, while he himself followed by the overland route to New Orleans.

As Wilkinson expected, Don Gayoso allowed his flat-boat an unmolested passage under the guns of Natchez; but it was unceremoniously seized at New Orleans by Don Navarro, the Spanish Intendant. Wilkinson had not yet arrived, and notwithstanding the reports so industriously circulated by his emissaries, the Spanish gen-

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\* The foregoing statements and quotations are from an article in "The Impartial Review," of August 30, 1806.

tleman had never heard of the great American general, nor of his fifteen thousand indomitable Kentucky riflemen. He was about to sell the cargo, and apply the proceeds toward the enormous deficiency which Spain every year discovered in the finances of the colony, when, fortunately for Wilkinson, the transaction came to the ears of a prominent merchant, who at once reported the facts to Don Miro, the Spanish Governor. What followed can best be told in some extracts from a report made by this merchant—Daniel Clark—to the Hon. Timothy Pickering, Secretary of State, a few years later, under President Washington.

“About the middle of the year 1787,” he says, “the foundation of an intercourse with Kentucky and the settlements on the Ohio was laid, which daily increases. Previous to that time, all those who ventured on the Mississippi had their property seized by the first commanding officer whom they met, and little or no communication was kept up between the countries. . . . An unexpected incident, however, changed the face of things, and was productive of a new line of conduct: the arrival of a boat belonging to General Wilkinson, loaded with tobacco and other productions of Kentucky, was announced in town, and a guard was immediately sent on board of it. The general’s name had hindered this being done at Natchez, as the commandant was fearful that such a step might be displeasing to his superiors, who might wish to show some respect to a general officer—at any rate, the boat was proceeding to Orleans, and they

could there resolve on what measures they ought to pursue, and put them in execution. The government not much disposed to show any mark of respect or forbearance toward the general's property, he not having at that time arrived, was about proceeding in the usual way of confiscation, when a merchant in Orleans" (Clark himself), "who had considerable influence there, and who was formerly acquainted with the general, represented to the Governor that the measures taken by the intendant would very probably give rise to disagreeable events: that the people of Kentucky were already exasperated at the conduct of the Spaniards in seizing on the property of all those who navigated the Mississippi, and if this system was persisted in, would, very probably, in spite of Congress and the Executive of the United States, take upon themselves to obtain the navigation of the river by force, which they were able to do; a measure for some time dreaded by this government, which had no force to resist them, if such a plan was put in execution. Hints were likewise given that Wilkinson was a very popular man, who could influence the whole of that country; and probably that his sending a boat before him with a wish that she might be seized, was but a snare laid for the government, that he might have an opportunity at his return to inflame the minds of the people, and having brought them to the point he wished, induce them to appoint him their leader, and then, like a torrent, spread over the country and carry fire and desolation from one end of the province to the other. Governor

Miro, unacquainted with the American government, ignorant even of the position of Kentucky with respect to his own province, but alarmed at the very idea of an irruption of Kentucky men whom he feared without knowing their strength, communicated his wishes to the intendant, that the guard might be removed from the boat, which was accordingly done ; and a Mr. Patterson, who was the agent of the general, was permitted to take charge of the property on board, and sell it free of duty.

“The general, on his arrival in New Orleans some time after, informed of the obligation he lay under to the merchant who had impressed the Governor with such an idea of his importance and influence at home, waited on him, and in concert with him formed a plan for their future operations. In his interview with the Governor, that he might not seem to derogate from the character given of him by appearing concerned in so trifling a business as a boat-load of tobacco, hams, and butter, he gave him to understand that the property belonged to many citizens of Kentucky, who, availing themselves of his return to the Atlantic States by way of Orleans, wished to make a trial of the temper of this government, that he on his arrival might inform his owners what steps had been pursued under his eye, that adequate measures might be afterward taken to procure satisfaction. He acknowledged with gratitude the attention and respect manifested by the Governor toward himself in the favor shown to his agent ; but at the same time mentioned that he would not wish the Governor to ex-



pose himself to the anger of the court, by refraining from seizing on the boat and cargo (as it was but a trifle), if such were the positive orders from court; and he had not a power to relax them according to circumstances.

“Convinced by this discourse that the general rather wished for an opportunity of embroiling affairs, than sought to avoid it, the Governor became more alarmed. For two or three years before, and particularly since the arrival of the commissioners from Georgia, who had come to Natchez to claim that country, he had been fearful of an invasion at every annual rise of the waters, and the news of a few boats being seen on the Ohio was enough to alarm the whole province. He resolved in his mind what measures he ought to pursue (consistent with the orders he had from home not to permit the free navigation of the river), in order to keep the people of Kentucky quiet; and in his succeeding interviews with Wilkinson, having procured more knowledge than he had hitherto acquired of their character, population, strength, and dispositions, he thought he could do nothing better than hold out a bait to Wilkinson to use his influence in restraining the people from an invasion of this province, till he could give advice to his court, and require further instructions. This was the point to which the parties wished to bring him, and being informed that in Kentucky two or three crops were on hand, for which, if an immediate vent was not found, the people would not keep within bounds, he made Wilkinson the offer of a



permission to import on his own account to New Orleans, free of duty, all the productions of Kentucky, thinking by this means to conciliate the good-will of the people, without yielding the point of navigation : as the commerce carried on would appear the effect of an indulgence to an individual, which could be withdrawn at pleasure.

“On consultation with his friends, who well knew what further concessions Wilkinson could extort from the fear of the Spaniards, by the promise of his good offices in preaching peace, harmony, and good understanding with this government, until arrangements were made between Spain and America, he was advised to insist that the Governor should insure him a market for all the flour and tobacco *he might send*, as in the event of an unfortunate shipment he would be ruined. while endeavoring to do a service to Louisiana. This was accepted ; flour was wanted in Orleans, and the King of Spain had given orders to purchase more tobacco for the supply of his manufactory at home than Louisiana at that time produced, and which was paid for at about nine and a half dollars per hundred-weight. In Kentucky it cost but two, and the profits were immense. In consequence, the general appointed his friend Daniel Clark his agent here, and returned by way of Charleston.” \*

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\* The foregoing is copied from the notes to Clark's book upon Wilkinson, pp. 6-9. The paper as given in Wilkinson's "Memoirs," differs from it in some few particulars.

Several other interviews ensued, and Wilkinson was most hospitably entertained by Governor Miro, who became every day more friendly and condescending. He remained in New Orleans during all of the months of June, July, and August, and until far into September, and his relations with the Governor and with Navarro soon became so intimate as to give rise to "sly hints and insinuations" as to their nature and tendency. During this period, says Mann Butler, in his "History of Kentucky," at the Governor's request, he gave to him, for the information of the Spanish ministry, a memorial "in writing, respecting the political interests of Spain and the inhabitants of the United States dwelling in the regions upon the Western waters. This he did at length, in a document of fifteen or twenty pages, which the Governor transmitted to Madrid, to be laid before the King of Spain. In this document he urges the natural right of the Western people to follow the current of the rivers flowing through their country to the sea. He states the extent of the country, the richness of the soil, abounding in choice productions, proper for foreign markets, to which they have no means of conveying them should the Mississippi be shut against them. He sets forth the advantages which Spain might derive from allowing them the free use of the river. He proceeds to show the rapid increase of population in the Western country, and the eagerness with which every individual looked forward to the navigation of that river. He describes the general abhorrence with which they received the intelligence

that Congress was about to sacrifice their dearest interest, by ceding to Spain for twenty years, the navigation of the Mississippi ; and represents it as a fact that they are on the point of separating themselves entirely from the Union, on that account. He addresses himself to the Governor's fears by an ominous display of their strength, and argues the impolicy of Spain in being so blind to her own interest as to refuse them an amicable participation in the navigation of the river, thereby forcing them into violent measures. He assures the Spanish Governor that, in case of such alternative, 'Great Britain stands ready, with expanded arms, to receive them,' and to assist their efforts to accomplish that object, and quotes a conversation with a member of the British Parliament to that effect. He states the facility with which the province of Louisiana might be invaded by the united forces of the English and the Americans, the former advancing from Canada by the way of the Illinois River, and the latter by the way of the Ohio River ; also the practicability of proceeding from Louisiana to Mexico, in a march of twenty days ; that in case of such invasion, Great Britain will aim at the possession of Louisiana and New Orleans, and leave the navigation of the river free to the Americans. He urges forcibly the danger to the Spanish interests in North America, with Great Britain in possession of the Mississippi ; as she was already in possession of the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes. He concludes with an apology for the freedom with which he had expressed his views by the Governor's particular request ;

but such as they are, they are from a man *whose head may err, but whose heart can not deceive.*"

The average commercial conscience may not be very much shocked by the tortuous diplomacy to which Wilkinson confessedly resorted to open the Mississippi to his commerce; but it is scarcely a reasonable supposition that he remained in that pestilential town during the three most sultry and unhealthy months of the year, solely to write the foregoing memorial, sell a small cargo of produce, and form a commercial connection with the merchant, Daniel Clark. Nor can a high-born Castilian gentleman, like Don Miro, be suspected of lavishing attentions upon a mere trader in Western produce, unless said trader had wares to sell which he deemed of more consequence than "hams, butter, and tobacco." A dense mystery overhung this whole transaction for all of fifty years, and until the curtain was lifted from it by the Spanish Government consenting to the examination of Wilkinson's correspondence and Miro's dispatches. Then it was discovered that this native-born American, only recently in the official service of his country, and soon to be elevated to the chief command of her armies, had, during those unhealthy months, bargained to barter away the district of Kentucky, and indeed the whole territory as far east as the Alleghanies, for a mess of Spanish pottage. Miro's correspondence clearly reveals the fact that Wilkinson addressed a memorial to the Spanish Government—in addition to the one already quoted—which has not even yet been published. Its

character, however, may be readily gathered from some expressions of Miro's in a dispatch to the Spanish minister of date January 8, 1788. He therein alludes to "Wilkinson's great project" as a crime for which he is liable to be "arrested," and reminds the minister that in Wilkinson's memorial he expresses himself as conscious that he has put at stake his "life and honor." In the same dispatch Miro adds: "The delivering up of Kentucky into his Majesty's hands, which is the main object to which Wilkinson has promised to devote himself entirely, would forever constitute this province a rampart for the protection of New Spain."\*

Of this opinion also was Navarro, the Intendant of New Orleans, who had been brought into the conferences between Miro and Wilkinson. In an official dispatch, which about this time he addressed to the Spanish minister, to be submitted to his king, he "depicted in vivid colors the dangers which Spain had to apprehend for her American colonies, from the thirteen provinces which had lately become independent, and assumed their rank among the nations of the earth. He dwelt with peculiar emphasis on the ambition and thirst of conquest which his keen eye could already detect in the breast of the

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\* Most of these dispatches, if not all, were originally in cipher, and are now to be found in the archives of Spain. By consent of the Spanish Government, copies of them have been made for the State of Louisiana, which copies are now deposited in the office of the Secretary of State at Baton Rouge. The quotations herein are from various extracts printed in Gayarré's "Spanish Domination in Louisiana."



new-born giant, who, as he predicted with remarkable accuracy, would not rest satisfied until he had extended his domains across the continent, and bathed his vigorous young limbs in the placid waters of the Pacific. And how was this dread event, so clearly foreseen, to be prevented? By severing the Union—dividing the Atlantic States from the boundless West, where so much power was already slumbering in the lap of the wilderness. To effect this was not, in his opinion, very difficult, if the propitious circumstances, then existing, were turned to advantage without loss of time, and by the use of proper means. “Grant,” he said, “every sort of commercial privileges to the masses of the Western region, and shower pensions and honors on their leaders.”

To this showering of “pensions and honors on the leaders” Miro was agreed; but he advised his government that commercial “privileges should be granted to only a few individuals having influence among them as is suggested in Wilkinson’s [secret] memorial, because, on their seeing the advantages bestowed on these few, they might be easily persuaded to acquire the like by becoming Spanish subjects.”

It is evident, from his correspondence, that Miro was confident he was now about to perform an important service to his country—remove from it a great danger, and annex to it a vast territory, with a rapidly increasing population already outnumbering that of Louisiana more than two to one. This expectation must have given him no ordinary gratification, for, after a large expenditure



that Congress was about to sacrifice their dearest interest, by ceding to Spain for twenty years, the navigation of the Mississippi ; and represents it as a fact that they are on the point of separating themselves entirely from the Union, on that account. He addresses himself to the Governor's fears by an ominous display of their strength, and argues the impolicy of Spain in being so blind to her own interest as to refuse them an amicable participation in the navigation of the river, thereby forcing them into violent measures. He assures the Spanish Governor that, in case of such alternative, 'Great Britain stands ready, with expanded arms, to receive them,' and to assist their efforts to accomplish that object, and quotes a conversation with a member of the British Parliament to that effect. He states the facility with which the province of Louisiana might be invaded by the united forces of the English and the Americans, the former advancing from Canada by the way of the Illinois River, and the latter by the way of the Ohio River ; also the practicability of proceeding from Louisiana to Mexico, in a march of twenty days ; that in case of such invasion, Great Britain will aim at the possession of Louisiana and New Orleans, and leave the navigation of the river free to the Americans. He urges forcibly the danger to the Spanish interests in North America, with Great Britain in possession of the Mississippi ; as she was already in possession of the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes. He concludes with an apology for the freedom with which he had expressed his views by the Governor's particular request ;

sonable action of Wilkinson. On him, therefore, rests the responsibility for the disquiet and positive suffering it inflicted upon the entire West, and for the havoc and bloodshed it entailed upon the devoted colony along the Cumberland. It has been questioned "whether Wilkinson went further than to deceive the Spanish authorities with a pretended disloyal intent toward his own government. He exaggerated," it has been said, "his own importance and influence, and promised much to the Spaniard which he could never have performed, and scarce thought of performing. And he did so purposely, that he might exact the money which his extravagance required. He kept no promise made to the Spanish intendant, but regularly received the king's money."\* In other words, he was a traitor to both the Spaniards and his own countrymen. In either view of his conduct it was alike infamous, and attended with the same disastrous results.

It is no doubt true that Wilkinson had no idea or intention, from the very first, of converting the West into a Spanish province. So far he deceived Miro. But he was scarcely back in Kentucky before he notified the Spanish Governor that Kentucky must be made a republic, allied to Spain, but nominally independent. This he knew would equally as well serve the Spanish purpose, which was to weaken the Union. Moreover, it would avert from Spain the jealousy of foreign powers.

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\* John Mason Brown, "Centennial Address."

In these views Miro coincided, and he so expressed himself in his dispatches to his Government. This end Wilkinson sought with every appearance of sincerity; and it was the one that would best promote his own interest; for he could count upon being himself the head of the new State, and thus at once gratifying his two strongest passions—love of self and power. His government once firmly established, Spain might have found him an unruly dependant. The man was governed solely by self-interest, and, once in possession of the requisite power, he might have thought that his interest would be subserved by the Spaniards evacuating New Orleans, and allowing him a theatre for the magnificent Southwestern empire which, it is no great stretch of credulity to believe, he himself suggested to Aaron Burr, eighteen years later. But I do not propose here to either accuse or defend General Wilkinson. It concerns my subject, however, to record some of his words and actions, and the result can not be avoided if from these an unfavorable estimate should be formed of his character.

He embarked at New Orleans for Philadelphia, on his return to Kentucky, in September, 1787, bearing with him an official permit from Governor Miro, which allowed him to introduce Western produce in his boats into Spanish territory free of duty. With the end revealed by his correspondence distinctly in view, he now set about its attainment with consummate ability. He appears to have been for some time detained in Philadelphia, for he did not reach Kentucky until February,

1788; but, prior to his arrival there, he instructed his business partner—a Major Dunn—to buy up produce in every corner of Kentucky. This Dunn at once proceeded to do, everywhere proclaiming the important concession which Wilkinson had obtained from the Spanish authorities. Of this concession, it was announced, every man could avail himself by selling his produce to Wilkinson, or by paying him for its freightage down the Mississippi.

These were grateful tidings to planters who had not a current coin in their pockets, and whose products were rotting on the ground because they would not sell for enough to pay the cost of harvesting. To bring about this access to the New Orleans market, the settlers had, time and again, memorialized Congress and the State Legislature, and the only result they had seen was the abortive Jay treaty. They now saw that, what the Federal Government could not do, Wilkinson had effected by personal negotiation. Some sagacious men shook their heads, and said that the transaction had about it an odor of corruption—that Wilkinson had obtained his trading concession by bribing the Spanish officials. But the majority of planters, like other men, are not sagacious; or if they are, they are seldom so scrupulous as to inquire how the money is come by which buys their bacon and tobacco. It is certain that the Kentuckians did not ask this question about Wilkinson, for he leaped at once into almost unbounded popularity. And, as he rose in public estimation, the General Government fell.

“What sort of a Congress is this,” men everywhere asked, “which can not do what is done by a private individual?”

This was the state of public feeling when Wilkinson crossed the Alleghanies, and in a chariot drawn by four horses, and attended by a retinue of colored outriders, entered Lexington, Kentucky. At any other time these unostentatious people might have been disgusted with this affected display, but now they saw in it only what was appropriate to one who had achieved a great triumph in diplomacy. Everywhere they flocked about him, and everywhere Wilkinson was received with distinguished honors. The universal adulation seems to have well-nigh turned his head, for, before he had been in Kentucky long enough to broach his project to any but a few intimate friends, he dispatched a pirogue in charge of a couple of boatmen, to Miro, with this message in cipher: “All my predictions are verifying themselves, and not a measure is taken on both sides of the mountains which does not conspire to favor ours.”

The “measures” to which Wilkinson alludes were those which were being taken for the separation of Kentucky from Virginia, and the admission of the district as a State into the Union. Several conventions had been held to consider the subject, and the last one had voted a petition to the mother-State for a separation. To this Virginia had now agreed, with the proviso that Congress should first consent to receive Kentucky as one of the United States. The Kentuckians had forwarded



a petition to this effect to Congress, and had called a convention to meet on the 28th of the ensuing July, to form a Constitution for the new State.

What followed can best be told in Wilkinson's language to Miro and Navarro. With his accustomed energy he had laden a fleet of flat-boats with produce, and on the 15th of May, 1788—only three months after his return to Kentucky—he had dispatched them, in charge of Major Dunn, down the Mississippi. By this gentleman he forwarded a cipher dispatch to the Spanish Governor and Intendant, a portion of which was as follows :

“On the first day of January of the next year, 1789, by mutual consent, this district will cease to be subjected to the jurisdiction of Virginia. It has been stipulated, it is true, as a necessary condition of our independence, that this territory be acknowledged an independent State by Congress, and be admitted as such into the Federal Union. But a convention has already been called to form the Constitution of this section of the country, and I am persuaded that no action on the part of Congress will ever induce this people to abandon the plan which they have adopted, although I have recent intelligence that Congress will, beyond a doubt, recognize us a sovereign State. . . .

“The convention of which I have spoken will meet in July. I will, in the mean time, inquire into the prevailing opinions, and shall be able to ascertain the extent of the influence of the members elected. When this is done, after having previously come to an understanding



with two or three individuals capable of assisting me, I shall disclose so much of our great scheme as may appear opportune, according to circumstances, and I have no doubt but that it will meet with a favorable reception; because, although I have been communicative with no more than two individuals, I have sounded many, and, wherever it has seemed expedient to me to make known your answer to my memorial, it has caused the keenest satisfaction. Colonel Alexander Leatt Bullitt, and Harry Innis, our attorney-general, are the only individuals to whom I have intrusted our views, and, in case of any mishap befalling me before their accomplishment, you may, in perfect security, address yourselves to these gentlemen, whose political designs agree entirely with yours. Thus, as soon as the new government shall be organized and adopted by the people, they will proceed to elect a Governor, the members of the legislative body and other officers, and I doubt not but they will name a political agent with power to treat of the affair in which we are engaged, and I think all this will be done by the month of March next. In the meantime I hope to receive your orders, which I will do my utmost to execute. . . .

“I do not anticipate any obstacle from Congress, because, under the present federal compact, that body can neither dispose of men nor money, and the new government, should it establish itself, will have to encounter difficulties which will keep it weak for three or four years, before the expiration of which I have

good grounds to hope that we shall have completed our negotiations, and shall have become too strong to be subjected by any force which may be sent against us."

A copy of this letter, forwarded by Major Dunn, Miro dispatched to the Spanish minister at Madrid on the 15th of June, with these observations: "This major confirms all of Wilkinson's assertions, and gives it out as certain that, next year, after the meeting of the first assemblies in which Kentucky will act as an independent State, she will separate entirely from the Federal Union; he further declares that he has come to this conclusion from having heard it expressed in various conversations among the most distinguished citizens of that State; that the direction of the current of the rivers which run in front of their dwellings, points clearly to the power to which they ought to ally themselves."

Wilkinson now addressed himself to his great task with his accustomed energy. How he went about it, he explains in a subsequent dispatch to Governor Miro. In it he says: "Immediately after having sent you my dispatch by Major Dunn, I devoted all my faculties to our political designs, and I have never since turned aside from the pursuit of the important object we have in view. If subsequent events have not come up to our expectations, still I conceive that they are such as to inspire us with flattering hopes of success in due time; and, although in the conjectural opinions which I have presented to you and Navarro, I may in some par-

ticulars have been deceived, you will yet see that, in the main, I expressed myself with a prophetic spirit, and that important events have occurred to confirm the accuracy of my sentiments.

“When Major Dunn left Kentucky, I had opened myself only to the Attorney-General Innis and to Colonel Bullitt, who favor our designs, and indirectly I had sounded others, whom I also found well disposed to adopt my ideas. But having made a more strict examination, I discovered that the proposed new Government of the United States had inspired some with apprehensions, and others with hopes—so much so, that I saw that this circumstance would be a cause of some opposition and delay. I also perceived that all idea that Kentucky would subject itself to Spain must be abandoned for the present, and that the only feasible plan to the execution of which I had to direct my attention was that of a separation from the United States, and an alliance with Spain, on conditions which could not yet be defined with precision. I considered that, whatever be the time when the separation should be brought about, this district being then no longer under the protection of the United States, Spain might dictate her own terms; for which reason I embraced without delay this last alternative.

“The question of separation from the United States, although discussed with vehemence among the most distinguished inhabitants of this section of the country, had never been mentioned, in a formal manner, to the people

at large ; but now was the time for making this important and interesting experiment, and it became my indispensable mission to do so. I had to work on a ground not yet prepared for the seed to be deposited in it, and I felt that, to produce a favorable impression, I had to proceed with reserve, and avoid with the utmost care any demonstration which might be calculated to cause surprise or alarm. For these motives, I gave an equivocal shape to the expression of my design, speaking of it in general terms, as being recommended by eminent politicians of the Atlantic coast, with whom I had conversed on this affair, and thus by indirect suggestions and arguments I inspired the people with my own views, without presenting them as such, because it would have been imprudent in me to divulge them under the existing circumstances, and I can give you the solemn assurance, that I found all the men belonging to the first class of society in the district, with the exception of Colonel Marshall, our surveyor, and Colonel Muter, one of our judges, decidedly in favor of separation from the United States, and of an alliance with Spain. At first, these two men had expressed this same opinion with warmth, but now their feelings have taken a different direction from private motives of interest and personal pique, for which reasons I have very little to dread from their influence ; but, at the same time, I foresaw that they would avail themselves of the opposition made by some literary demagogues, who were under the influence of fear and prejudice. Nevertheless, I determined to lay the

question before our convention, and I took the necessary measures accordingly." He goes on to say that he had been obliged to expend five thousand dollars in furtherance of the great project, and that an additional expenditure of twenty-five hundred dollars would convert Marshall and Muter to his way of thinking; but, unfortunately, he had not the money. Miro at once recommended to the Spanish minister that these two sums should be paid to Wilkinson.

There is good evidence that some of this money was used by Wilkinson in corrupting his associates, and it is clear that he did not "proceed with reserve" in approaching some of the leading men of Kentucky. To at least half a dozen he must have opened his plans in all their fullness. In this, as in all extensive conspiracies, there was an inner and an outer ring: a central group to whom was disclosed the whole design, and who bargained for and received pensions and emoluments from Spain; and an outer circle, ignorant of the entire plot, and content with the crumbs that were to fall from the Spanish table—namely, the free navigation of the Mississippi. This outer circle was, no doubt, mainly composed of honest men, who contemplated nothing more than a commercial connection with Spain; but they were numerous enough to warrant Wilkinson's expectation that, through their votes, he could control the approaching convention. Consequently, he looked confidently forward to that convention to erect Kentucky into an independent Commonwealth.



It is singular that, in all his treasonable correspondence, Wilkinson does not once make mention of Isaac Shelby. Shelby was, at this period, by far the most popular man in Kentucky. He had been employed at surveying in the district as early as 1776, and he then selected a location in the vicinity of Boonesborough, which, when subsequently granted to him, was the first preëmption in Kentucky. The war over, and his business as commissioner for laying out the Cumberland lands completed, he returned to Boonesborough, and marrying a daughter of Nathaniel Hart, the associate of Henderson in the purchase of Kentucky from the Cherokees, he settled upon this tract as a planter. There he lived for more than half of man's allotted term of life, and there he died, full of age and of honor.

The district had been largely settled by Revolutionary soldiers, and at this time, and for years afterward, they formed the bulk of its population. They retained their Revolutionary traditions, and still looked to their old officers as their natural leaders. Among all these officers, none was held in such general esteem as Shelby. It was universally known that he had decided the battle of Point Pleasant, which had made possible the settlement of Kentucky, and that to him and John Sevier belonged the glory of having turned the tide of the Revolution at King's Mountain. But, aside from these considerations, Shelby had great weight with the people because of his unswerving uprightness, his clear and solid judgment, and his elevated patriotism, which no personal



motive had ever seduced from a single pursuit of the good of his country. He was not a brilliant man, able, like Sevier, to sway a whole people by his personal magnetism. He was more nearly Carlyle's ideal of the man of power—silent, reticent, and seldom speaking, except in short, crisp sentences which expressed his exact ideas, with never a shade of disguise or circumlocution. From early manhood he had fought, not for any one section, but for the whole country, and the whole country had, in his mind, a future boundary as far west as the sun's setting. In appearance, manner, and character, he was the exact opposite of Wilkinson. Thorough patriot as he was, he might be an important obstacle to its success should he become acquainted with the treasonable conspiracy. The Sevier and Shelby papers were burned during the Union occupation of Knoxville; but Dr. J. G. M. Ramsey, in whose possession they were, and who was familiar with their contents, assured me that they contained nothing to indicate that Wilkinson had in any manner approached Shelby. It is certain that Shelby was in ignorance of the conspiracy till within a few weeks of its intended execution.

Thus affairs stood—the deep-scheming traitor sure of his end, and the sleeping country ignorant of the mine that was about to explode beneath it—when one of those trifling incidents occurred which so often turn the course of history. Sevier at this time, as I have elsewhere related,\* was struggling at desperate odds to defend the

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\* "John Sevier, as a Commonwealth-Builder," pp. 158-196.

settlers south of the French Broad against the combined Creek and Cherokee nations. These settlers numbered about three thousand, and they had located on their lands under grants and promises of protection from North Carolina. But the Indian title had not been extinguished, and one of Sevier's first acts as Governor of Franklin had been to conclude a treaty with the Cherokees, by which they ceded these lands to the new State, and thus gave the settlers peaceable possession. In doing this, Sevier assumed the treaty-making power, but that was no more than had been done by nearly every one of the States, even when they were colonies. His action was brought to the notice of Congress, and that body feeling its sovereignty invaded, and jealous of its rights—as most weak bodies are—proceeded to make with the Cherokees the treaty of Hopewell, by which Sevier's treaty was ignored, all lands south of the French Broad and Holston were relinquished, and the settlers declared to be intruders upon Cherokee territory. North Carolina followed up the treaty by a proclamation ordering the settlers to remove at once from their homes. But for nearly three years both proclamation and treaty were dead letters; for John Sevier was at the head of the border militia, and his name was a terror to the Cherokees.

But the State of Franklin was no sooner dissolved, and Sevier a proscribed and outlawed man, than the ten thousand allied Creeks and Cherokees went upon the war-path, and in overwhelming numbers moved down upon

the feeble settlements. Sevier went at once to their rescue, and he was there now with only about nine hundred men, struggling to hold his ground against not far from ten thousand. Proscribed, outlawed, and cut off from supplies, as he was, what could he do to either promote or retard Wilkinson's treasonable project? To all appearance, nothing; and yet, the Spanish minister, Gardoqui—who had now taken an active hand in furthering the plot—deemed him of sufficient consequence to be approached with friendly overtures. He commissioned one Dr. James White, who, though a member of the American Congress, was not unwilling to soil his hands with Spanish gold, to visit Sevier, and assure him that if he and the Watauga people desired to ally themselves with Spain, and would favor her interests, they should be protected in any form of civil and political government that was most agreeable to them. Sevier had very much the same feeling for the Spaniards as Robertson, but he was never known to treat his worst enemy with discourtesy. With his accustomed urbanity he received this Spanish emissary, and with even more than his accustomed frankness told him that he was in a desperate strait; that while he had not ten rounds of ammunition to a man, he was in hourly expectation of an overwhelming attack from the savages. He and his comrades had made up their minds that there was nothing for them but to die at their posts; and yet, he said, a little gunpowder would save them. If Spain would furnish that, he would pledge his personal honor that it

should be paid for as soon as he had flogged the Creeks and Cherokees.

Dr. White assured Sevier that Spain would furnish the powder. To procure it, he had only to make application to Don Gardoqui; and he added that Spain was about to spread her sheltering wings over the entire Mississippi Valley, and on James Wilkinson in Kentucky, and John Sevier on the Watauga, she would shower her most distinguished favors. Sevier had no exalted opinion of Wilkinson, and the mention of his name, coupled with that of Kentucky, was enough to arouse all his remarkable powers of fascination. Neither friend nor enemy had ever been able to withstand them, and the Spanish envoy did not on this occasion. When White had finished telling all that he knew—which may not have been much—he wrapped a buffalo-robe about him, and stretched himself upon the floor of the log station to get a night's slumber; and then Sevier wrote the suggested letter to the Spanish minister. That being done, he penned on the fly-leaf of a large Bible another letter—to Shelby—recounting all the details related by White, and stating his conviction that Wilkinson was engaged in a conspiracy with the Spaniards. By this time it was midnight, and his guest was soundly asleep. Then Sevier hurried forth and into an adjoining cabin, where he roused Major Nathaniel Evans, who had left Robertson, and come to him, as soon as he had heard that his old commander was going upon his present desperate expedition. Recounting to Evans the contents of the letter,

and reminding him that Shelby would have only six weeks in which to act before the assembling of the convention, Sevier bade him ride as if the fate of the West hung on his horse's heels! Thus did that proscribed and outlawed man, who had lost all that most men value, and was at that very moment standing with his back to the wall, sternly waiting death at the hands of uncounted enemies, stretch out his arm across two hundred miles of trackless wilderness, to not only save Kentucky, but to shape for long centuries the destinies of the West. Is it not hard to find in all history a more magnificent spectacle? \*

The rest is soon told. The convention met on the 28th of July, 1788. When it was organized, its president rose, and stated that he had the day before received a message from the Secretary of Congress, which he would proceed to read to the convention. The substance of the message was, that Congress was not prepared to receive the new State into the Union until the Federal Constitution had been generally ratified by the individual States. The announcement was received with ill-concealed exultation by the adherents of Wilkinson. This refusal, they thought, would exhaust the patience of the people, and precipitate an immediate revolution. What followed can not be better told than in the words of Wilkinson to Miro. "From this proceeding of Congress," he says, "it resulted that the convention was of

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\* See Appendix A.



opinion that our proposed independence and separation from Virginia not being ratified, its mission and powers were at an end, and we found ourselves in the alternative either of proceeding to declare our independence, or of waiting, according to the recommendation of Congress. This was the state of affairs, when the Hon. Caleb Wallace, one of our supreme judges, the Attorney-General Innis, and Benjamin Sebastian" (another supreme judge, and with the others then and subsequently a pensioner of Spain), "proposed a prompt separation from the American Union, and advocated with intrepidity the necessity of the measure. The artifice of Congress was exposed, its proceedings reprobated, the consequences of depending on a body whose interests were opposed to ours were depicted in the most vivid colors, and the strongest motives were set forth to justify the separation. The arguments were unanswerable, and no opposition was manifested in the course of the debates. Nevertheless, sir, when the question was finally taken, fear and folly prevailed against reason and judgment. It was thought safer and more convenient to adhere to the recommendation of Congress, and, in consequence, it was decided that the people be advised to elect a new convention, which should meet in the month of November." All which merely exhibits the fact that Shelby had his men well in hand, and that his tactics were to let Wilkinson's friends do all the talking, while his should do all the voting.

The traitors met even a worse defeat in the Novem-



ber convention, for meanwhile Shelby and his associates, Judge Muter and Thomas Marshall—father to the great Chief-Justice, and the intimate friend of Washington—had more thoroughly aroused the delegates to the danger of the situation. But here again I will allow Wilkinson to be his own historian. He writes to Miro: “The last convention was legally elected, and met at Danville in the month of November, in conformity with the decree above mentioned. Marshall and Muter had, in the mean time, been scattering distrust and apprehensions calculated to do injury to our cause. It is evident, however, that it has acquired considerable force; but, in order to elicit an unequivocal proof of the dispositions of that assembly, I submitted to its examination my original memorial and the joint answer of yourself and Navarro. . . . Some of our friends urged me to avail myself of this opportunity to revive the great question, but I thought that it was more judicious to indulge those who, for the moment, wish only that a new application be made in relation to the independence and separation of Kentucky from Virginia, and that a memorial be addressed to Congress on the necessity of obtaining the free use of the navigation of the Mississippi. I assented to these last propositions the more readily, that it was unanimously resolved that should any of them be rejected, then the people would be invited to adopt all the measures necessary to secure for themselves a separate government from that of the United States, because it would have become evident that Congress had neither

the will nor the power to satisfy their hopes. I determined, therefore, to wait for the effects which will result from the disappointment of those hopes, and on which I rely to unite the country into one opinion. This is the basis on which the great question now rests, and the convention has adjourned to the next month. . . . Thus, sir, if we review the policy favored by the inhabitants of Kentucky, we see that the most intelligent and the wealthiest relish our designs. . . .

“There are three conditions which are requisite to perpetuate the connection of this section of the country with the Atlantic States. The first and the most important is the navigation of the Mississippi; the second, which is of equal consequence, is the admission of this district into the Union as an independent State, and on the same footing with the others; the third, and the last, which is of less moment, is the exemption from taxes until the befalling of the two events previously mentioned. Now, sir, as two of these conditions are inadmissible, either by the Atlantic States or by Spain, can any one hesitate to declare what will be the consequence? With due deference I say—no; because, as it is not rational to suppose the voluntary casting away of property, that another may profit by it, so it is not to be presumed that the Eastern States, which at present have the balance of power in their favor in the American Government, will consent to strip themselves of this advantage, and increase the weight of the Southern States, by acknowledging the independence of this district,

and admitting it to be a member of the Federal Union. . . .

“The same effect will be produced by the suspension of the navigation of the Mississippi, which lies entirely in the power of Spain, and which must reduce this section of the country to misery and ruin ; and as it has been stipulated that the operations of the Federal Government shall be uniform, the new Congress will have to lay taxes, without exception whatever, over the whole country submitted to its jurisdiction. The people here not having the means of paying those taxes, will resist them, and the authority of the new government will be set at naught, which will produce a civil war, and result in the separation of the West from the East.

“This event is written in the book of destiny. But if, to produce it, we trust solely to the natural effect of political measures, we shall experience some delay. It is in the power of Spain, however, to precipitate its accomplishment by a judicious co-operation ; and permit me here to illustrate the observations which I presented some time ago to yourself and Navarro, in my answer to your inquiries as to the nature of that co-operation.

“As long as the connection between the Americans of the East and of the West on this side of the Appalachian Mountains shall produce reciprocal benefits, and an equal security to their common interests and happiness, the Union will maintain itself on a solid foundation, and will resist any effort to dissolve it ; but as soon as it shall be ascertained that one section of the confederacy derives

from the Union more advantages than the other, and that the blessings of a good government—such as peace and protection can not be equally distributed, then harmony will cease, and jealousies arise, producing discord and disunion. In order to aid the favorable dispositions of Providence, to foment the suspicions and feelings of distrust already existing here, and inflame the animosity between the Eastern and Western States, Spain must resort to every artifice and other means which may be in her power.

“I have stated that the navigation of the Mississippi, and its admission as an independent State, and a member of the Union, are rights claimed by the people of this part of the country, and constituting one of the principal conditions under which its connection with the Atlantic States is to continue. Hence it follows that every manifestation of the power of Spain, and of the debility of the United States, every evidence of the resolution of the former to retain exclusively for herself the right of navigation on the Mississippi, and every proof of the incapacity of the latter, will facilitate our views. Every circumstance also that will tend to impede our admission as an independent State, will loosen the attachment of many individuals, increase the discontent of the people, and favor the execution of our plan.

“While this affair is pending, Spain ought to consider the navigation of the Mississippi as one of the most precious jewels of her crown; for, whatever power shall command that navigation, will control all the country

which is watered by that river, and by those streams which fall into it. This control will be as effective and complete as that of the key upon the lock, or that of the citadel over the exterior works which it commands. The grant of this boon ought to be looked upon as the price of our attachment and gratitude, and I beg leave to be permitted to repeat that there must be known no instance of its being extended to any other than those who understand and promote the interests of Spain in this part of the country, I entreat you, sir, to believe that this question of navigation is the main one on which depends the union of the West and East ; and that, if Congress can obtain the free use of the Mississippi, and if Spain should cede it without condition, it would strengthen the Union, and would deprive Spain of all its influence on this district.

“The sanguine spirit of an American impels him to construe in his favor everything that is left doubtful, and therefore Spain can not act with too absolute precision on this important question. You must not forget, sir, that such was my first impression, in which I have been daily confirmed by subsequent observations and experience. The generality of our population are constantly discussing and fostering these ideas, and as long as the hopes they have conceived on this subject are kept up, it is a circumstance which will militate in favor of the Union, and will delay the effect of my operations.”

The foregoing remarks, which were promptly for-

warded to the Spanish ministry, encouraged Spain in her obstinate refusal to open the Mississippi, and they prompted the long hostilities with which she incited the Creeks and Cherokees to harass the Cumberland settlers.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### A DECEITFUL PEACE.

THE correspondence between Robertson and McGillivray was of no practical benefit to the beleaguered colony along the Cumberland. From it, however, resulted the fact that, no sooner did Spain conceive the idea that she could make either vassals or allies of the border settlers, than the New Orleans authorities made friendly overtures to Robertson; assuring him of peace with the Indians, and the free navigation of the Mississippi, if he would look to Spain for protection. As early as April 20, 1783, and on several subsequent occasions, Miro had held out to him strong inducements to settle on the west of the Mississippi; offering his colony a vast territory, exemption from taxation, the free exercise of religion, and every material aid to worldly prosperity. These offers Robertson had courteously declined, but he had taken advantage of them to open a friendly correspondence with the Spanish Governor. The treaty with McGillivray, which looked to his exter-

mination, had not then been made ; but Robertson was aware of the potent influence which the Spaniards exercised over the savages. He therefore aimed to conciliate them, and in his efforts to that end he went so far as to flatter Miro's vanity by giving his name to the Cumberland region, when it was erected into a political "district" by the North Carolina Legislature. The compliment seems to have secured Miro's personal good-will to Robertson, but it did not induce him to obstruct the hostile policy of his government. The settlement was weak ; it needed a few years of quiet to give it strength enough to defy both Spaniards and Indians. Hence, Robertson sought peace ; but he got only war from his treacherous neighbors. Now, he met these friendly overtures with an absolute refusal to have any dealings with Spain.

The formal reply of Robertson to the overtures of Miro I have not been able to discover ; but there can be no question of its character. To all his friends and neighbors he expressed unqualified opposition to any kind of alliance with the Spaniards ; and this he did when a strong party among the settlers, eager for commercial facilities, and longing for a respite from continual conflict, urged upon him some arrangement by which the colony might secure rest, and freedom from midnight massacre. Many of the leading men in the district expressed such sentiments, and one of them—Brigadier-General Daniel Smith—went so far as to open a private correspondence with the Spanish Governor on

the subject. In one of his dispatches to Wilkinson, Miro says that he had received a letter from General Smith, dated March 4, 1789, which informed him that "the inhabitants of Cumberland, or Miro, would, in September, send delegates to North Carolina, in order to solicit from the Legislature of that State an act of separation, and that, as soon as this should be obtained, other delegates would be sent from Cumberland to New Orleans, with the object of placing that territory under the domination of his Majesty." \*

If McGillivray may be believed—and it is as well to doubt his statements, unless they are strongly corroborated—even Messrs. Hoggatt and Ewing, the messengers and confidential friends of Robertson, shared Smith's sentiments, and went so far as to express them to the Creek chieftain in the interview which has been mentioned, and this before Robertson had addressed McGillivray in the equivocal language that is quoted on a preceding page. Directly after the visit of those gentlemen, McGillivray wrote to Miro as follows: "I must inform you that, since the departure of Garion with my last letters, two delegates from the District of Cumberland have arrived, with proposals of peace to this nation: They represented to me that they were reduced to extremities by the incursions of our warriors, and that, to obtain peace and our friendship, they were disposed to submit to whatever conditions we might choose to im-

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\* "Spanish Domination in Louisiana," p. 262.

pose ; and, presuming that it would have a powerful influence with me, and would secure them my favor, they added that they would throw themselves into the arms of his Majesty as subjects, and that Cumberland and Kentucky are determined to free themselves from their dependence on Congress, because that body can not protect either their persons or their property, or favor their commerce, and they therefore believe that they owe no obedience to a power which is incapable of benefiting them." \*

And shall we censure the colonists if, hemmed in by daily danger from countless enemies, and altogether neglected both by North Carolina and the General Government, they did indulge in these sentiments ? Can we fail to sympathize with their unparalleled privations and sufferings, and to wonder at the heroic fortitude with which they had borne them during eight long and dreadful years ? But privation, suffering, personal peril, the slaughter of his children and his best loved friends, and

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\* Gayarré's "Spanish Domination in Louisiana," pp. 213, 214. It is observable, in McGillivray's letters to Robertson, that he alludes solely to Mr. Hoggatt, and makes no reference whatever to his companion, Mr. Ewing. I hence conclude that these sentiments, if spoken at all, were not expressed by the latter gentleman. He was a man of prominence, and decidedly outspoken ; but not one of his many recorded utterances accords with those attributed to the envoys by McGillivray. It is altogether probable that the wily Creek chief exaggerated the friendly remarks of Robertson's messengers, in order to enhance his own importance with the Spanish Governor.

daily life in a furnace of fire, did not for a moment shake the iron resolution of Robertson. To ward off the torch and the tomahawk from his friends, he was willing to "palter in a double sense" with a perfidious enemy; but his real feelings are expressed in the following words which he daily addressed to his neighbors, and wrote to Sevier at this period. "In Kentucky as well as here," he says, "people suffer greatly from the power which the Spaniards possess over the navigation of the Mississippi, as well as by the influence they exert over the Indians. We all have had abundant reason to judge and pronounce the exercise of such power and influence to be 'evil, only evil, and that continually.' They have tempted us to abandon our settlements; failing to accomplish by their specious offers their sinister designs, they have enraged and backed our savage neighbors to a war of extermination upon us. We despise them for their duplicity, we scorn their allurements, and we abhor and curse their savage cruelties. We can never trust them, and never prosper in any alliance or business with them. Heaven will avenge our wrongs some day. And even should we ourselves be cut off in the struggle, let us hold fast our faith, our innocence, our integrity, our honor, our government, and our possessions. The devices of the wicked shall not always prosper; Heaven will avenge us yet!"

Remarkable words to have been spoken by a man in the situation of Robertson! Had they been uttered where histories are written, they would be to-day



among the annals of this nation, and this man's name a household word in every corner of our country. But his words were spoken, and his deeds were done, amid the silence of a far-away forest; and so it is left to a distant time to do appropriate honor to this true moral hero, this grand leader of Western civilization.

The war upon Robertson continued; but the year 1789 is spoken of as one of comparative peace along the Cumberland. Only thirty lives were taken by the Indians, and a thousand horses stolen, ninety-seven of which belonged to Robertson. His life, however, came once more near being sacrificed. He had gone one morning to a field, where some of his men were at work, about half a mile from his dwelling. As was customary, a sentinel was stationed on the lookout, and about noon he gave warning of some movements in a neighboring canebrake. While the attention of Robertson was being called to the circumstance, a volley was fired by the Indians, a ball striking him in the foot, passing through the bone, and inflicting a wound which made him a cripple for long afterward. The Indians were a party of thirty, but they fled as soon as they had delivered their fire; and Robertson ordered immediate pursuit by some volunteers who hastily came together. The savages gave the whites a long chase, but were at last come up with, and, in a sudden attack, were routed, with the loss of one killed and five or six wounded, together with "sixteen guns, nineteen shot-pouches, and all their baggage, con-



sisting of blankets, moccasins, leggins, skins, and other articles.”<sup>a</sup>

This insignificant skirmish is mentioned, merely because it afforded his first military experience to a young man of about twenty-two, who subsequently attained a singular eminence in American history. He had in the previous year been appointed district attorney of the Cumberland District, and on the 12th of January, 1789, was admitted to practice at the bar of Nashville. During that year he appeared as counsel in forty-two of the one hundred and ninety-two cases before the court, and in the succeeding year in two hundred and twenty-eight out of three hundred and ninety-seven cases. On the early records is the following entry :

“Wednesday, October 6, 1790 : Court met according to adjournment. Andrew Jackson, Esq., proved a bill of sale from Hugh McGary to Gasper Mansker for a negro man, which was O. K.” The initials were Jackson’s abbreviation for “*Oll Korrekt*,” and an orthography equally as original is observable in all his subsequent literary productions. But if Jackson could not spell, he could fight, and in this skirmish he is reported to have been “bold, dashing, fearless, and mad upon his enemies.”

The young attorney had brought to Nashville intelligence that the requisite two thirds of the States had ratified the new Federal Constitution. The old Confederacy had been compared by these people to a barrel with thirteen staves, but without a hoop to bind the staves to-

gether, and hence liable to fall apart at the first jar or collision. Now the rejoicing was great that a cooper had been found to securely hoop the barrel; and when the Fourth of July came round, expression was given to the universal joy over this new birth of a nation. Powder was burned, and toasts were drunk; and in the last toast their own fire-girdled community received appropriate recognition. It was alluded to as "The Salamander, which lives in the fire"; "The solitary Phoenix, that revives from its ashes"; and "The Bed of Pansy or Heart's-ease, trodden upon, yet expanding its leaves, and perfuming the atmosphere"—which toasts are good evidence of the presence of some one in the colony of higher literary attainments than Andrew Jackson.

Soon after the tidings brought by Jackson, came news to the Cumberland of the organization of the new government, and the inauguration of George Washington as first President of the United States. North Carolina had not yet ratified the Constitution, nor ceded her Western territory to the Union; but the colonists looked for these events in the near future, when they would be under the immediate government of the venerated Washington. Nothing could have given them greater satisfaction, for in the prospect they saw peace, security, an open Mississippi, and the removal of every obstacle to their progress in numbers and prosperity. Nowhere in the country was there more absolute confidence in the great man who had carried the colonies

through the Revolution than beyond the Alleghanies. Several of the leading colonists were his personal friends. Thomas Marshall was his constant correspondent ; John Sevier had held a commission as captain in his corps, under royal rule in Virginia, and had given his name to the Watauga District before Washington held a national command, or was known to the general public outside of the Old Dominion. Therefore, the rejoicing was great when these anticipations were realized by North Carolina again joining the Union, and soon afterward—on the 25th of February, 1790—ceding to the United States all her territory west of the Alleghanies.

The first acts of Washington served to increase the universal confidence that was felt in his wisdom and judgment. He appointed, as Governor of the new Territory, William Blount, of North Carolina—who had commended himself to the Western settlers by a strenuous opposition in the old Congress to the treaty of Hopewell ; and he gave to John Sevier the rank of general in the United States Army, and military command of Washington District ; and a like rank, and command of the Cumberland District, to James Robertson. Only a few days subsequent came tidings that the General Government had concluded a treaty with McGillivray, by which the machinations of Spain would be thwarted, and a permanent peace secured with the powerful Creek nation.

Before the organization of the new government, Congress had appointed commissioners to treat with the

Creeks, but the negotiations had come to nothing. The whole Western frontier was in a disturbed condition ; and Washington was no sooner in office, than he directed his attention to securing peace with all the Northern and Southern Indians. He sent messengers with friendly overtures to McGillivray, but they were coldly received. Not discouraged by this rebuff, he then dispatched other messengers, inviting the Creek chief to New York, offering to defray the expense of his journey, and to recognize any just claim he might make for the destruction or confiscation of his property during the Revolution. McGillivray lent a kindly ear to these overtures, for he saw in them an opportunity to gratify his strong passion for display, and a possible chance to cajole money from the United States Treasury.

He set out for the seat of government, accompanied by twenty-eight of his principal warriors—all of them painted and plumed, and arrayed in the highest style of Creek half-nakedness, and he himself bedecked with all the trappings of barbaric royalty. At Philadelphia, and all along the route, the delegation met the most flattering attentions ; and, at New York, McGillivray was received as if he had been the sovereign of one of the “nations of the earth.” He was given elegant accommodations and liberal entertainment. The Tammany Society—then but recently organized—turned out to greet him and his warriors. With their Grand Sachem at their head, they appeared with their savage parapher-

nalía of blanket and breech-cloth, hatchet and war-clubs, horse-tail plumes and rooster-feathers, moccasins and leggins, and tinkling ornaments, and all of them painted as if to go upon the war-path. Thus arrayed, they expected to make a profound impression on the untraveled sons of the forest; but the simple savages met all the display with a stolid indifference, or at the most a guttural "Ugh!" which with them expresses almost anything except astonishment. The truth is, that the North American Indian has about as hearty a contempt for sham as Thomas Carlyle himself.

But, amid all this adulation and empty display, McGillivray did not forget the business he had gone upon; and, in the negotiations that ensued, he showed quite as much diplomatic skill as the American officials. The treaty, which was soon concluded, secured to the Creeks valuable presents, a liberal annuity, and the restoration of an extensive territory which they had previously ceded to the whites; and to McGillivray, by a private article, one hundred thousand dollars as compensation for his confiscated property, and the rank and pay of brigadier-general in the Army of the United States. These extraordinary concessions were made to the Creeks, because of a single clause contained in the treaty, by which they acknowledged themselves to be "under the protection of the United States, and of no other nation whatever." This, it was thought, would effectually thwart the machinations of Spain, and secure permanent peace to the border settlements.



And had permanent peace been the result, it would not have been too dearly purchased by this treaty. But no such result was within the scope of McGillivray's intentions. His sincerity may be judged of from the fact that at this very time he was an officer in both the British and Spanish armies! When about to set out for New York, he had written to the Spanish Governor at New Orleans that, "although he should conclude a treaty of peace with the Federal Government, yet he would ever remain faithful to his old friends the Spaniards; and he asked from the court of Madrid many favors, with an annual stipend of fifteen thousand dollars to carry on hostilities against the projected establishment of the South Carolina Company, if not against the United States."\* At the same time he expressed the same sentiments in letters to his intimate friend William Panton, a Spanish merchant at Pensacola. Alluding to the results he expected from the proposed peace negotiations, he said to him, "Experience has proved that such matters are only to be attained by the *longest fire, and point of sword*, particularly with Americans."

Soon after the execution of the Creek treaty at New York, a similar one was concluded with the Cherokees at Knoxville, by which that tribe, in a like manner, acknowledged itself to be "under the protection of the United States, and of no other nation whatsoever." In

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\* Gayarré's "Spanish Domination," p. 300.



friendship with the Choctaws and Chickasaws, and at peace now with the Creeks and Cherokees, the Cumberland colony could reasonably look forward to an unbroken progress in prosperity and population. These expectations would doubtless have been at once realized but for the bad faith of McGillivray, and the treason of Wilkinson, which encouraged the continued hostility of the Spaniards.

And yet into this furnace of fire men ventured, and they survived there, and increased in numbers, in defiance of both Indians and Spaniards. Nothing better illustrates the mania for Western emigration, which set in directly after the Revolution, than the fact that the flame-girdled settlements along the Cumberland doubled in numbers between the years 1784 and 1790. In 1784 the population did not exceed 3,500—in 1790, by actual count, it was 7,042—one thousand of whom were expert riflemen. At this time, also, the settlements covered a larger area than ever before in their history. In a letter to the Secretary of War, written about this period, Governor Blount describes the country as follows: "The settlements extend up and down the Cumberland River, from east to west, about eighty-five miles, and the extreme width from north to south does not exceed twenty-five miles, and its general width does not exceed half that distance; and not only the country surrounding the extreme frontier, but the interior part (which is to be found only by comparison with

the more exposed part), is covered generally with thick and high cane, and a heavy growth of large timber, and, where there happens to be no cane, with thick underwood, which afford the Indians an opportunity of lying days and weeks in any and every part of the district in wait near the houses, and of doing injuries to the inhabitants, when they themselves are so hid or secured that they have no apprehensions of injuries being done in return; and they escape from pursuit, even though it is immediate. This district has an extreme frontier of at least two hundred miles."

The people still dwelt either within or in the immediate vicinity of fortified stations; but these had multiplied greatly, and now numbered not less than thirty-five, nearly all of them stronger and better armed, than those erected by the first settlers. At no previous time had the colony been so well prepared to defend itself; nevertheless, every member warmly welcomed the coming peace, and cordially assented to the policy of the General Government, which was conciliation and forbearance toward the Indians, coupled with such uniform kindness as should "wean and win" them from alliance and friendship with the Spaniards. "The policy," said Sevier, "will not be successful. Your kindness the Indian will mistake for weakness. He can be controlled only by his fears. Only when he thinks you more powerful than he is, will he be your friend." All civilized intercourse with the North American savage bears wit-

ness to the truth of these conclusions ; but for years the General Government pursued an opposite policy, and, even when a hostile Creek or Cherokee was on every by-path, it forbade his being pursued beyond the boundary of the white settlements.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A STORM ON THE CUMBERLAND.

BY the recent treaties the Creeks and Cherokees had acknowledged the supremacy of the United States, and agreed to look to them for protection, and to "no other nation whatsoever." This was as it should be, for these Indians occupied United States territory. In holding treaty relations with them, Spain had committed a breach of international law, which had been submitted to only because the Federal Government lacked the power to uphold its rights. It now sought to gain by diplomacy what it could not compel by force, and to wean the Indians from the Spanish alliance by a persistent course of conciliation and kindness. Evidently, the success of this policy would depend upon the good faith of McGillivray, and his ability to impress upon his people a due respect for treaty obligations. What fidelity might be expected from the Creek chief, may be inferred from his known crafty and treacherous character, and his intense hatred of the Americans; what sacredness the majority of his people would attach to a treaty, may

be gathered from the remark of one of them to Sevier. "Powder and lead, stroud, and Kaskaskia, me know," he said, "but paper me don't know."

Only fear of punishment, or constant donations, could restrain the savages from continual acts of hostility toward the whites; and now that the Government had adopted the latter policy, it would have as competitor the Spaniards, whose largesses had exceeded its own tenfold,\* and who, moreover—not having a west-going emigration to provide for—had never asked of these nations the cession of an acre of territory. In this buying of the Indians the United States could not hope to outbid the Spaniards. Sevier was therefore right—the peace policy of the Government would be a failure. Fear of Sevier might restrain McGillivray from raids upon the Watauga and French Broad settlers, but no such fear would operate in favor of the feeble settlements along the Cumberland. Peace, therefore, to the heroic Robertson was now, as before, dependent upon the will of the Spaniards, and their action would doubtless be governed by the advices they should continue to receive from Wilkinson.

I have stated that in the convention of November 1788, secession in Kentucky met its Waterloo. But it clearly appears from his lengthy dispatch to Miro,

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\* In a dispatch to the Spanish ministry, dated February 24, 1794, the Baron de Carondelet states the yearly expenditure, in presents and pensions to the Indians, to be fifty-five thousand dollars—nearly the entire revenue of Louisiana.

quoted on a preceding page, that of this fact Wilkinson was not yet conscious. In this he resembled a species of reptile that is said to survive, and exhibit vital power—closing its rapacious jaws upon its victim with an iron grip—long after its head has been severed from its body. So, though his treasonable conspiracy had lost its vitality, Wilkinson was still potent for evil. He could continue to encourage Spain in her now hopeless dream of severing the trans-Alleghany region from the Union, and thus strengthen her resolve to close the Mississippi, and prolong her hostile influence upon the Southwestern Indians. This doubtless he would do, whether he thought the end of Spain could be accomplished or not, in order to retain the annual pension of two thousand dollars which Miro's official dispatch of May 22, 1790, shows to have been awarded him by the Spanish Government. In this same dispatch Miro recommends that a like pension be granted to Judge Sebastian, "because," he says, "he will be able to enlighten me on the conduct of Wilkinson, and on what we have to expect from the plans of the said brigadier-general." That is, a "thief was set to catch a thief," a spy to watch another spy; and such infamous proceedings these Spaniards styled diplomacy!

Owing to its effect upon the policy of Spain, the treason of Wilkinson exerted for years a baleful influence upon the colony along the Cumberland; but it is unnecessary to go further into its details in this narrative. It need only be said that he succeeded, by means of Spanish



gold and Spanish promises, in corrupting some of the most prominent men in Kentucky. The movements of the conspirators, as they from time to time disclosed themselves, were duly reported by Thomas Marshall to Washington; and early in 1790, the President ventured upon the hazardous step of giving office to all the leaders except Wilkinson, in hopes to thereby detach them from the conspiracy. At last Wilkinson himself applied for an appointment in the army. This fact he records as follows: "I pursued," he writes, "the trade in which I was engaged until the year 1791, when, discouraged by disappointment and misfortunes, the effect of my ignorance of commerce, I resumed the sword of my country in December of the same year."\*

He omits to say that his petition for reinstatement in the army was granted solely on the recommendation of Thomas Marshall. When censured for thus aiding a man he knew to be a traitor, Marshall justified himself by saying that he considered Wilkinson "well qualified for the commission he had solicited and obtained; that while he remained unemployed by Government, he considered him dangerous to the public quiet of Kentucky, perhaps to her safety; that if his commission did not secure his fidelity, it would at least place him under control in the midst of faithful officers, whose vigilance would render him harmless, if it did not make him honest."†

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\* Wilkinson's "Memoirs of My Own Times," vol. ii, p 114.

† H. Marshall's "History of Kentucky," vol. i, p. 391.

At the suggestion of Washington, General Wayne kept a close eye upon Wilkinson ; but all his vigilance did not "render him harmless," nor "make him honest." With his new oath of allegiance fresh upon his lips, he continued a treasonable correspondence with the Spanish officials, and there is positive proof that down to the year 1800 he was in receipt of a Spanish pension. His intrigues kept Kentucky in a dangerous ferment till 1792, when it was admitted as a State, and Shelby was elected its first Governor. And even subsequent to these events, and during the entire four years of Shelby's administration, it required the unswerving loyalty of the men who had rallied around him in 1788, and all his own indomitable will and wisdom, to hold Kentucky firmly to her moorings in the Union. So potent may be a little poison infused into the veins of the body politic, and so harmful the influence which one man, destitute of principle and patriotism, may exert upon a loyal and intelligent community.

From such a man as Wilkinson, it is a relief to turn to one like Robertson. He has passed through the fire, and come out gold ; but a fiercer fire is yet before him. From this, too, he will come out doubly refined, and from the midst of it will look serenely abroad, and say again to his comrades : "We may be cut off in the struggle, but let us hold fast our faith, our innocence, our integrity, our honor, and our government. The devices of the wicked shall not always prosper. Heaven will avenge us yet."

For longer than Troy withstood the Greeks had this handful of backwoodsmen held their ground against two savage nations, backed by a powerful European monarchy; but, directly following the treaty with McGillivray, there came a lull in the fiery hail-storm that had raged along the Cumberland. At the first dying away of the tempest, the settlers emerged from their log fortresses to again plow their fields, plant their corn, and engage in the ordinary employments of civilization. New colonists, too, soon began to crowd the two roads which were now open from the older settlements. Large numbers would assemble at the eastern termini of these roads, and there go into camp to await the coming of the guard which, at stated periods, was dispatched to escort them to the Cumberland. Being themselves well armed, the emigrants would, under this guard of fifty practiced woodsmen, traverse the three hundred miles of wilderness with no fear of Indian aggression. And arrived at their destination they would be sure of meeting a cordial welcome, for every new-comer added to the strength and security of the community. Every door was open to the new settler; and his location being decided on, all the neighborhood set at once to work to build his dwelling. This, even if it happened to be a stockade, would be in readiness, fully furnished, in the course of four or five days; so many and so skillful would be the hands engaged in its erection. The furniture would not be of the first order of elegance, but it would probably comprise about all the domestic appliances that are essential to hu-

man existence. The dwelling furnished, and the family moved into it, there would come the "house-warming," when all the neighbors would again come together; but now for a "joyful time," at an old-fashioned merry-making. James Gamble, the noted fiddler, would be among them, and he would no sooner draw his bow across the strings, and strike up "Hie-Bettie-Martin," than a dozen couples would spring upon the puncheon floor, and reel would follow reel, and jig succeed to jig, intermingled with "square-sets," "contra-dances," and "three and four handed," till the stars went out, and the sun arose, and scored another day upon the calender. And "fast and furious" the merriment might flow, even though a hundred savages were prowling in the adjacent forest.

And the savages were there again, in every one of the settlements; but not now on evil deeds intent, with tomahawk, and scalping-knife, and short-barreled Spanish rifle. Those implements they had hung up in their wigwams for use on some future occasion. Now they had come for "trade"—for stroud, and beads, and other trinkets; but most of all for "bald-face," "old-rye," "tangle-foot," and "knock-'em-stiff"—which terms, in backwoods commerce, stand for that compound of strychnine, juniper-berries, and alcohol, which in highly civilized communities goes by the name of whisky. Many serpents had come into the Indian country, and many of the braves had been bitten by them, and nothing will cure a serpent-bite but a strong dose of the "bald-face" medicine. One of these Indians with a large jug upon

his shoulder, applied to "King Boyd," at the sign of the Red Heifer—the distillery already mentioned. "How much do you want?" asked the distiller. "Jug—you fill him—young warrior—snake bite him—die soon—bald-face cure him," was the reply. "But two gallons is too much—it will kill him." "No, no," was the answer. "Snake very big—bite very bad—young warrior sure die." And he staggered away, to experience a worse bite than that of the rattlesnake. But even the most badly bitten of the savages created no disorder in the settlements. The rule of Robertson was strict that none of his visitors should imbibe fire-water except when miles away from a white man's dwelling. So, peaceable relations were not disturbed by the subtle fiend that robs both white man and red of his reason.

It really seemed that a day of peace, and rest, and genuine prosperity had at last dawned upon the colony. The few of the earlier settlers who had escaped slaughter thought the worst had passed, and encouraged the newcomers to believe they would not have to endure the horrors and cruelties of savage warfare. But Robertson advised all not to be too adventurous. The Indian, he said, was not to be trusted. He had no natural love for the white man; and behind him were the Spaniards, who were crafty, malignant, and treacherous.

When the autumn came, news arrived that Washington had reopened negotiations with Spain, with every prospect of bringing them to a favorable conclusion; also that Congress had passed an act for the defense of the



Western frontier, and that a body of troops was already on its way to the Cumberland. These reports served to increase the general confidence in the administration of Washington, who, it was universally believed, would know how to deal with the wily Spaniards. And to all, not in the secrets of the Spanish Cabinet, there did appear good ground for the opinion that a speedy end would come to the harassing complications in regard to the navigation of the Mississippi. War seemed about to break out between Spain and Great Britain, and it was expected that one of the first movements of the British would be the invasion of Louisiana by passing troops from Canada through United States territory. This could not be done without the consent of the American Government, and Washington deemed the occasion opportune for demanding of Spain the relinquishment of her claim to the exclusive navigation of the Mississippi. He accordingly instructed Mr. Carmichael, the *chargé d'affaires* at Madrid, to press the demand upon the Spanish Cabinet with pertinacious earnestness. This Carmichael did, representing that "the navigation was of such absolute necessity to the United States, that they must, sooner or later, acquire it, either through separate action and by the exertion of their own individual power, or in conjunction with Great Britain. This was the decree of Providence, written on the very map of the Continent of America, and therefore it could not be resisted by human agency, however obstinate and powerful it might be. Was it not the part of wisdom to anticipate



an irresistible event, and make the most of it, by gently and peacefully facilitating its accomplishment, which otherwise would inevitably be brought about by violence?"

But the overtures of Washington made no impression on the Spanish Cabinet. The decree of Providence, which Carmichael affirmed to be written on the American map, they were not able to decipher—it probably not being in the Spanish language—but they had a design of their own, and they believed the aforesaid map could be adjusted in accordance with it. At the head of this Cabinet was now Manuel Godoy, a young man with neither national spirit nor statesmanlike quality, who had been elevated to his high position by Charles IV, for no better reason than because he was the especial favorite of his queen. Godoy saw that he had merely to pocket the insult which Great Britain had put upon Spain in regard to the settlement at Nootka Sound, to avoid a war with that power; and, hence, he need not bargain with Washington to prevent the passage of British troops down the Mississippi. Besides, he fully believed in Wilkinson's assurance to Miro that the Western country could be erected into an allied power, which would be a rampart to the Spanish possessions. In this view he was confirmed by the opinion of Don Diego Gardoqui, who had returned to Spain, and was now high in Godoy's confidence. As appears from a subsequent dispatch from Mr. Carmichael to Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State, Don Gardoqui reported that he had witnessed,

while minister in this country, nothing but dissensions, divisions, and jealousies, among both the American States and people; that he had conversed with many citizens of the Atlantic States who desired to see the navigation of the Mississippi prohibited, and our limits narrowed, in order that all Western productions might be brought through the seaboard States, and our population be more concentrated. Also, he had met citizens of the Western country who treated their adhesion to the rest of the Union as visionary; and he had arrived at the conclusion that the American people did not desire this navigation, at least not so generally desire it as to make any united effort to obtain it. And further, it was his firm conviction that the Western people, whenever they should acquire force, would separate from the United States.

This was "the decree of Providence" as read by the Spaniards; but, inasmuch as Providence might indefinitely postpone its execution, and meanwhile the Kentuckians might become so restive under a blockaded commerce as to thwart the aforesaid decree by descending upon New Orleans with rifle and gunpowder, the Spanish Cabinet decided to accelerate the providential designs by a slight modification of their policy. To cement their alliance with the Southern Indians they would increase their largesses of stroud, beads, and "Kaskasky," and give McGillivray the rank and pay of a Spanish major-general, also an annual pension of two thousand dollars, and, in addition, as many guns, and as much ammu-

nitition as he might ask for; thereby altogether outbidding the United States in the recent treaties. To quiet the impatience of the Western people, the Spaniards would admit their produce down the Mississippi, and into Spanish ports, on the payment of a mere fifteen per cent duty; providing always that none of their productions, neither Yankee clocks, pork-barrels, nor tobacco or soap boxes, should have upon them the figure of the goddess of liberty;\* the said goddess being suspected of having no very exalted opinion of hereditary monarchy, when represented by such kings as Charles IV and such ministers as Manuel Godoy. This trading permission, it is evident, would completely frustrate, if nothing else did, all of Wilkinson's plans for severing the West from the Union. This important consideration appears to have escaped the notice of the sagacious Godoy, until it was brought to his attention by the Spanish Governor of Louisiana.†

McGillivray accepted the Spanish appointment and pension, and thus was relieved from being any longer in the position of the ass between two bundles of hay. So long as he held the same rank of brigadier in both the Spanish and the American army, there was nothing beyond mere personal feeling to incline him to serve one any better than the other. He held a divided allegiance; but now he was freed from the perplexing dilemma, and

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\* Gayarré's "Spanish Domination," p. 309.

† *Ibid.*, p. 285.

in a manner to satisfy his conscience, his feelings, and his pocket. However, he would make no open profession of faith until he could conclude an alliance with the Cherokees, and also with the Shawnees — the powerful tribe which had recently helped to inflict a crushing defeat upon General Saint Clair. Meanwhile, he would continue to hold the rank, and draw the pay, of an American brigadier; and would let his braves descend upon Robertson by the way of the Chickamauga towns, for thereby all their acts would be attributed to that nation of cut-throats.

The foregoing facts explain how it came to pass that in the spring of 1792 a more severe storm broke upon the Cumberland than any which had yet been experienced by the devoted colony. With a full knowledge of this atrocious violation of good faith, and having furnished the means for its commission, Spain remonstrated with the United States for entering into the recent treaty with McGillivray, on the ground that the Creek nation, occupying American soil, was by prior treaties taken under Spanish protection. To this remonstrance Jefferson replied: "Are we to understand that, if we arm to repel the attacks of the Creeks on ourselves, it will disturb our peace with Spain? That if we will not let them butcher us, Spain will consider it a cause of war? We love and we value peace; we abhor the follies of war, and we are not untried in its disasters and calamities. . . . We confide in our strength, without boasting of it; we respect that of others without fearing it."

Soon after Robertson received the favorable tidings in regard to the Spanish negotiations, there arrived at Nashville the Government troops that had been detailed to aid in the protection of the Cumberland district. They were a body of one hundred and ninety cavalry and infantry, and under their convoy came a numerous train of wagons and pack-horses bearing arms and merchandise for the friendly Chickasaws. The tribe had been much exposed to incursions from Indians hostile to the whites, and annoyed by visits from Spanish emissaries who had sought to win them over to their designs, but it had remained faithful to its pledges to Robertson, and now the Government was bent on rewarding its long fidelity. Piomingo being duly apprised of this, a large delegation of Chickasaws came to Nashville, and were hospitably entertained by the inhabitants. The goods were speedily unboxed and distributed among the delighted Indians. They consisted of "one thousand five hundred blankets; one hundred pieces of blue strouds, calico, linsey; blue, red, and yellow binding; fifty suits of clothes and fifty hats, for the chiefs; pieces of scarlet cloth for leggins, etc., and five hundred scalping-knives." A rifle was given to each chief, and "fifty good rifle-guns to the mountain-leader, Piomingo." The new-comers among the settlers were charmed with the simple ways and unaffected friendliness of the Chickasaws, and they rashly concluded that it would be an easy as well as a very pleasant thing for white and red people to "dwell together in unity."

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None of the Cherokees had been invited to this gathering, but some were there, professing to be the "white man's friends." Nevertheless, the old settlers did not like their appearance, and even the settlers' dogs regarded them with suspicion, keeping continually at their heels, and watching their every movement. One of the loudest in friendly profession, but for whom Robertson felt the strongest distrust, was a Chickamauga chief named Cutleotoy, the "head-man" of a small town named Tuscagee, on the Tennessee, opposite the present site of Chattanooga. He was known to be an inveterate enemy of the whites, and one of the most bloodthirsty among the Chickamauga bandits; but now, he said, he had buried the hatchet, was to be the white man's friend, and to no white man so friendly as to the good chief of the pale-faces along the Cumberland. Soon after he went away, some horses were missing from the outlying settlements; and not long subsequently word came to Robertson that Cutleotoy, on his return to Chickamauga, reported that the pale-faced chief had said to him: "Much blood has been spilled in our settlements; and now, take notice, if any more is shed, I will come and sweep your towns clean with Indian blood!" From which Cutleotoy concluded that it would be wise for the Cherokees to take the initiative, and descend with fire and tomahawk upon the Cumberland.

About the same time a Captain Craig, whom the Governor had dispatched on a mission to the Chickamaugas, returned to Knoxville reporting that while he was in the



Indian towns a body of warriors came in with scalps and some prisoners, whereupon a war-dance was held, with strong expressions of hostility to the whites ; also that McGillivray was again attempting to form a coalition of all the tribes against the Americans ; and that the Shawnees had joined the coalition, and sent messengers to the Cherokees warning them that they should regard all Indians as enemies who did not aid in a war against the United States. Captain Craig further reported that a party of eighty Creeks, who expected to be largely re-enforced, had crossed the Tennessee, while he was at Chickamauga, to make a raid upon the Cumberland.

These reports caused serious alarm among the settlers, and those most familiar with frontier life regarded them as sure precursors of a hostile invasion from the savages. It was not long before accounts came in of murders and depredations committed in the vicinity of some of the remote stations. No less than thirteen were killed in the course of a few weeks, among them an entire family in the neighborhood of the present town of Gallatin, except one little fellow of about six years, who escaped by climbing up the wide chimney, and there secreting himself till the horrid tragedy was over. In his hiding-place he heard the dying moans of his father, his mother, and his little brother and sisters ; and then, at the end of several hours, when all was still, he crept down and out into the dark night, and made his way through the lonely forest to the nearest station, two miles distant. The tale of this little child, thus in one hour orphaned

and cast alone upon the world, sent a thrill of horror through all the settlements. Women wept, and clutched their children closer to their bosoms; and strong men grasped their rifles, and with deep oaths denounced vengeance upon the accursed Chickamaugas. The murders had been committed by a party of about two hundred; doubtless a re-enforcement of the eighty Creeks who had been reported upon the war-path; but, as McGillivray had expected, the atrocities were attributed to the bandit tribe which had its home in the "five lower towns" along the Tennessee.

Another atrocity which occurred at this time served to still more inflame the popular feeling. From every quarter the settlers were hastening to offer their services to Robertson, and among the others were three young men who had their home on the Red River, near the present site of Clarksville. Their father was Valentine Sevier, that younger brother of John Sevier who, on the eve of the battle of Point Pleasant, going out with Robertson into the forest before the break of day, to shoot game for the breakfast of his company, discovered the advancing savages, and gave the alarm which saved the American army from destruction. Under his more distinguished brother he had fought at King's Mountain, and in nearly all of his numerous campaigns against the Indians, attaining, before the close of the Revolution, to the well-earned rank of colonel. He was still a hale man of only forty-five, alert, vigorous, and erect as an Indian; but he had a family of five sons and several daughters

growing up about him, and to settle them well in life he had emigrated to the Cumberland, and built a stockade on the very outskirts of the colony, about fifty miles from Nashville. Three of his sons were above sixteen ; and no sooner did the alarm reach the neighborhood than these young men, Robert, William, and Valentine, applied to their parents for leave to join the force that was gathering to resist the savages. The father did not refuse, and the mother said, "Go, my sons," and then she "parted from them with a smile and not a tear, sending messages to friends at the upper stations."

Accompanied by a young man named John Price, and two or three others, the young Seviers set out in a canoe to row up the river to Nashville. They had reached the upper end of one of those long convolutions of the Cumberland where the traveler, after rowing twelve or fifteen miles, comes round again to about his point of starting, when they were fired upon by a large body of savages, who, having observed them when they were lower down, had crossed the narrow isthmus between the upper and lower ends of the bend, and secreted themselves in the bushes along the margin of the river. The young men fought desperately, but what could they do against, perhaps, a hundred Indian rifles ? The low bulwarks of the canoe afforded no protection, and in a very few moments the three young Seviers were killed, and two of their companions desperately wounded. Only Price was left unhurt, to shoot the canoe down the stream, and out of rifle-range from the savages. What became of the

wounded is not stated; but the canoe was soon abandoned, and, floating down the river, was intercepted by the Indians who plundered it, and inhumanly scalped and mangled its insensible occupants. After wandering for a couple of days in the woods and canebrakes, Price came to Sevier's station and delivered his heavy news to the bereaved parents.\* It fell upon them like a thunder-bolt. It was the direst calamity that had ever befallen any branch of the family. Even at King's Mountain, only one of them had been offered up—Robert Sevier, the uncle of these young men. But wonderful was the stuff these pioneers were made of! This father, thus deprived at one blow of his chief supports, determined to stand his ground, and went deliberately about the strengthening of his defenses. It was only when he wrote to his brother that his grief broke out in one simple sentence. "Send me John" (the general's son) he said to him, "to come and stay with me, for I have now no other sons, but small ones." The stricken mother carried that sorrow ever in her heart, and did not cast it off, till she went to join her boys in a higher life, fifty-two years later, at the great age of a hundred.

This man was not Nolichucky Jack, the beloved of all

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\* This incident is related somewhat differently in Haywood's "History"; I have followed the account given in his "Life and Times of James Robertson," by A. W. Putnam, who married into the Sevier family, and must, therefore, be presumed to have known the correct tradition.

the people, but he was the brother of his blood, and there was something in the very name of Sevier to stir the pulses of the border. As men listened to the tale, they loaded their rifles and hurried away to Nashville, each one bearing some fresh story of Indian atrocity. One told of the family of Jason Thompson, near Bledsoe's Station, awaking at dead of night only to meet the tomahawk of the savage—the father, mother, and all their children, except one well-grown daughter, who was spared to be a slave, or even worse, among the Chickamaugas. Another saw as he came past Brown's Station, on the southern road, only eight miles below Nashville, the bodies of four little children who had been killed and scalped in open day, and thrown in a heap together near the highway. Another told of a remarkably similar atrocity, occurring on the same day, only a few miles from Brown's near a spring at Johnson's Station—four little brothers and sisters “all scalped and laid upon one another; a heap of children, living and dead.” One little boy managed to roll himself off the ghastly pile, but a more badly wounded little girl was unable to move from underneath her dead brother and sister. She recovered, and lived for twenty years, that horrid experience ever in her memory. A cherry-tree was planted on the spot, and it stands there to-day, a living monument to those slaughtered innocents.

Then came tidings that Dunham's Station, only eight miles southwest from Nashville, and less than four from Robertson's dwelling, had been sacked and burned,



and all within it massacred ; and that Colonel Kilpatrick, when on the trail of the marauders, had been waylaid, scalped, mangled, and beheaded. Among those who heard these tales of blood was a man named Radcliff, from the neighborhood of Gallatin, who had come to Nashville only the day before, to volunteer in defense of the settlements. As he stood there listening with blanched cheek and a heart wrung with pity for the anguish of his neighbors, there came to him one who said that, only twelve hours after his leaving home, his own house had been broken into, and his young wife and three babes slaughtered, and that, when the messenger left, they were still lying on the hearth-stone of his dwelling, weltering in their blood.

Other tales like these I could tell, but need I relate them ? Were these not enough to fire every soul in all the settlements with a firm resolve to exterminate the savages ? They had this effect ; and all, young men and old, clamored now to be led at once against the Chickamaugas. The tall cane still stood thick over all the settlements, affording a secure retreat for the Indians. Broken into small parties as they were, they could not be hunted from these hiding-places. The only effectual warfare upon them was in their own lairs along the Tennessee and Chickamauga. Of this Robertson did not need to be informed, and he sympathized deeply with the feeling of his neighbors ; but his hands were tied. The orders of the Government were strict that he should act solely on the defensive, and under no circumstances in-



vade the Indian country so long as negotiations were pending with the Spaniards. Of a like character were the written instructions of the Governor to the body of United States troops which had been sent for the protection of the settlements. "No pursuit," he wrote, "is to be continued beyond the ridge dividing the waters of Cumberland and Duck Rivers. Patrols and reconnoitring parties to be kept out from the stations, in search of, and to prevent any further depredations by, the Indians; and in case any Indians should be found lurking or skulking about to the northward of the ridge aforesaid, in the woods, off any path, or fleeing, to be considered and treated as enemies, save only Chickasaws and Choc-taws, women and children." These instructions might have been effective if carried out by a force about twenty times that of the colony, for in that case the savages would not have ventured to cross the prescribed boundary.

Robertson made the best dispositions for defense that were possible in the circumstances. Every man in the settlements was enrolled under efficient officers, and, the weaker stations being abandoned, a garrison was placed in every one of the stronger ones. A force of five hundred was held in reserve, exempt from special duty, but subject to "a moment's call for any emergency." To Captain Rains was given a separate command with which to range the woods and canebrakes, and come upon the savages in their lurking-places. This troop of mounted men was constantly in motion, and many a Creek and

Cherokee was sent by its unerring rifles to the "happy hunting-grounds"; but still the Indians were on every by-path and hidden away in every canebrake, and the number of murders did not diminish. There were probably several thousand savages in and around the settlements, and thus the numbers killed made no impression on the hostilities. Every day brought its tale of blood, and soon there was no security except behind the walls of the stations. Passing from one station to another was never ventured upon unless in considerable numbers. In reality the whole country was in a state of siege.

Robertson enjoined upon all extreme caution; but he seems to have, now and then, disregarded his own injunction, for it is recorded that one day, late in May, he ventured out on horseback to a spring about half a mile from his station, attended only by his oldest son, Jonathan. A party of Indians had secreted themselves in the near-by woods and canebrakes, and suddenly they fired their rifles, wounding Jonathan in the hip, and the general in the arm which held his rifle. His horse rearing at the same moment, Robertson lost his grasp upon the weapon, and was himself thrown to the ground, while the frightened animal galloped away. At that instant the Indians rushed out upon him from their ambush. His destruction seemed inevitable; but, seeing his danger, Jonathan, wounded as he was, sprang from his horse, and leveled at the two foremost of the savages. They fell at his fire; this brought the rest to a halt, and

enabled both father and son to get away in safety. The ball passed through Robertson's arm from the wrist to the elbow, shattering the bone, and leaving an open wound, which rendered the limb useless for years afterward.

This narrow escape of their leader startled every soul in the settlements. All recognized the fact that Robertson's fall would be the destruction of the colony, and knowing well that only an attack upon their own wigwams would drive away the savages, they clamored again to be led against the Chickamaugas. But again Robertson refused. He chafed at his instructions, told his neighbors that he would gladly lead them into the Indian country, but the orders he had were imperative, and the first duty of a citizen was to obey his Government. They could not know how much any rash action of theirs might embarrass Washington in his negotiations with the Spaniards.

In these circumstances some fiery spirits, who could not see why veneration for Washington, or consideration for the Spaniards, should require them to be shot down before their own doorways, determined, in defiance of all orders whatever, to invade the Indian country. Gathering together to the number of about two hundred, under Captain John Edmeston—one of that band of heroic brothers who had fought so gloriously at Long Island Flats, and King's Mountain—they rashly resolved to go upon the desperate expedition. Robertson was confined to his house by his wound, but, hearing of the move-

ment, he sent for the leaders. The result of the interview was the abandonment of the expedition. It is remarkable the control that Robertson had over these border people. It could have arisen from nothing but their confidence in his ability to lead, and in his unselfish devotion to the real welfare of the community.

The bloody work went on. Till the cold weather came, and drove the Indians back to their wigwams, death was everywhere in all the settlements. Though many of the savages fell, their numbers seemed to increase, and in the autumn Robertson discovered that the attacking force had been joined by the Shawnees. At midnight on the 30th of September, Buchanan's Station, only four miles south of Nashville, was attacked by a party of about seven hundred, composed partly of warriors of that tribe, and partly of Creeks and Cherokees.

In this fort the families of some twenty-five of the settlers had taken refuge, but it was manned at the time by only fifteen riflemen, and its four block-houses seemed poorly able to resist so overwhelming a force of assailants. But among its defenders were the scout Castleman, and others of equal skill and bravery. The first alarm was given by the frightened cattle, which rushed wildly past the fort on the approach of the savages. The night was very dark, and, not to waste their powder, the garrison withheld their fire till the Indians were within ten paces of the buildings. Then a simultaneous discharge burst

from the fort, and was replied to by a heavy and constant fire, which the savages kept up for an hour, never falling back to a greater distance, though one unbroken sheet of flame streamed from the port-holes and mowed them down by dozens.

The Indians had supposed the fort weakly defended, but were soon convinced that it was crowded with riflemen. Every second minute a hat would appear at a port-hole as if to fire, and an Indian would lodge a bullet in its crown, but in another minute another hat would appear at the same port-hole, and still the constant fire of the fort would go on without a moment's flagging. This constant fire, and showing of hats, was subsequently explained. More than thirty women were in the fort, and a still larger number of children. There were also three or four rifles to each one of the garrison. These the women loaded and handed with great rapidity up to the men, who also were re-enforced by Mrs. Buchanan, and several other women, who fired from the port-holes like the male defenders. The "show of hats"—which, from this circumstance, has become a national phrase—was made by the children displaying all the head-gear in the fort at the port-holes not manned by the garrison.

On several occasions the Indians attempted to set fire to the lower logs of the station, but every savage that ventured upon the rash act met a bullet from one of the bastions. At last a young brave, more bold than the rest, climbed to one of the roofs with a lighted torch in



his hand, to fire a block-house. A well-directed shot brought him instantly to the ground underneath one of the port-holes. As he lay there, mortally wounded, and his life blood fast flowing away, he applied his still burning brand to one of the lower logs, and, with his hard-returning breath, tried to fan it into a blaze to ignite the building. Suddenly his head fell back, the torch dropped from his hand, and was extinguished in a pool of his own blood, but with his latest breath he urged on his followers. He was a young brave of the "Running Water" town of the Chickamaugas, named Chia-chatt-alla.

Inspired by the desperate courage of this young brave, a score of savages now rushed forward with lighted brands to fire the fort; but every one was shot down before he had ignited the lower logs of the building. Then the savage fire grew fiercer, and it became certain death for one of the garrison to appear for an instant at any of the port-holes, the fire being mainly directed at those openings. From a space of the circumference of a foot, in the roof above the port-hole in the over-jutting, whence had proceeded the shots that killed the savages who had attempted to approach the walls, thirty Indian bullets were on the following day extracted.

Thus the conflict continued for an hour, when the solitary swivel at the Nashville fort shouted through the woods that rescue was coming. The Indians heard it, and knew that it meant that Robertson and his minutemen would be upon them by daybreak. Suddenly their



fire slackened, and they drew off from the fort, bearing away, as was their custom, their dead and wounded, except such as lay dangerously near to the walls of the station. As they passed out of rifle-range, Captain Rains and five of his men rapidly approached the fort on horseback. He had heard the firing at his station two miles away, and waiting for no re-enforcements, had hastened to the rescue with only the few who were with him at the moment. Soon others came in from Nashville and the near-by stations, and then the garrison ventured out, and examined the ground around the buildings. Everywhere among the trodden bushes were trails showing where the dead had been dragged away, and scattered here and there were numerous pools of blood, where numbers had fallen, for, packed together as they were, the Indians had been a broad mark for the settlers' rifles. The slaughter had been terrible. Numbers of the wounded died on the retreat, and were buried in the forest, where their graves were subsequently discovered by the white people.

The leader of the attacking force, a Shawnee chief, was killed by the first fire of the garrison, as was also the "White-Man Killer," a brother of the noted Dragging-Canoe, formerly head chief of the Chickamaugas. Other prominent chiefs of the Creeks and Cherokees fell during the action, and John Watts, the principal chief of the "lower towns," and the ablest man now among the Cherokees, was so desperately wounded that he besought his warriors to end his sufferings by decapitation. Not

one among the garrison was so much as wounded. And this successful defense against so overwhelming a force, was made by fifteen men and thirty women, battling behind weak walls for their own lives, and those of their children. Is it not true that we need to look no further than our own annals to find examples of the most exalted heroism?

Among the first of those who came to the help of the besieged garrison was a young man of nineteen, of slender build, and in appearance a mere stripling. His name was Joseph Brown, and he had been a captive among the Chickamaugas. While, with the others, he was examining the ground around the fort, he came upon the body of the young brave who had been shot from the roof of the block-house. He turned the dead face up to the light, and, he says: "I at once recognized my old chum, Chatt. There he lay dead, pierced with balls—shot down into his body as he was blowing the coals to set fire to the fort." Of this young man I shall have to say more, for it was through him that Robertson was at last enabled to subdue the savage Chickamaugas, and bring peace to the beleaguered colony along the Cumberland. In reading the history of these people, one is forcibly struck with the fact that the weak are sometimes chosen to confound the strong, and that on what seem slight and accidental events often hang results of vital moment and far-reaching consequences.

In a very few hours one hundred and eighty men had gathered together at the fort, and with them Robertson

at once set out in pursuit of the retreating savages. But the Indians had several hours the start, and had crossed the prescribed boundary before they could be overtaken. Thus was shown the futility of the orders of the Government. They could not have been better framed if they had been intended to erect the settlers into a target, and to afford absolute protection to the savages.

## CHAPTER X.

### CAPTIVITY AMONG THE CHICKAMAUGAS.

THE captivity of Joseph Brown among the Chickamaugas led so directly to the subjugation of that fierce and lawless banditti, that it forms an essential part of this history. The tribe was composed of the very worst elements—red and white—which then existed in the Southwestern country. Their towns extended for thirty miles along both banks of the Tennessee, from above Lookout Mountain to below Nick-a-jack Cave, and the tribe numbered at this time not far from two thousand warriors—the more lawless of the Creeks and Cherokees, re-enforced by white criminals escaped from justice, and Tory desperadoes who had been driven from the border settlements during and after the Revolution. Murder was their pastime; plunder their principal means of subsistence.\*

Some of the first settlers of Nashville came into collision with them, when, under John Donelson, they took

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\* A fuller account of these savages is given in "The Rear-Guard of the Revolution," pp. 150-154.

their perilous way down the Tennessee to that remote outpost of civilization. It was abreast of the Chickamauga towns that they lost nearly thirty of their number. Time and again Sevier had invaded their strongholds, burned their towns, destroyed their crops, and driven the bravest of their warriors like frightened deer to the mountains; but, hiding there in inaccessible retreats, they would abide in absolute security till the storm was over, and then would emerge again to the daylight, rebuild their birch-bark cabins, and resume their barbarous warfare upon the white settlers.

For eighteen years they were the terror of the entire border. Sevier was well-nigh everywhere; but even his sleepless vigilance could not guard every scattered dwelling. Issuing in small parties, these miscreants would fall at midnight upon some unprotected farm-house or feebly-defended station, plunder and slay the occupants, and be miles away before pursuit could be undertaken. For some years their favorite field for depredation had been the Cumberland settlements, and, since the destruction of Coldwater, their towns had been the thoroughfare of the Creeks in their raids upon Robertson. Every white man beyond the Alleghanies prayed for vengeance upon them, but until their secret haunts among the mountains should be discovered, that prayer had to remain unanswered. At last, however, came this strippling, Joseph Brown, to meet this Goliath of Gath, and through him the power of the Chickamaugas was broken.

His father was Colonel James Brown, an officer of the North Carolina line during the Revolution, who, for his services in the war, had been paid in "bounty-warrants," which he entered for lands on the Duck, Tennessee, and Cumberland Rivers. Early in 1788, he resolved to migrate to a tract he had "located" about two miles west of Nashville, and, the only overland route to that place being as yet merely a hunter's trace through the forests of Kentucky, he decided to take the river route, of nearly two thousand miles, down the Holston and Tennessee, and up the Cumberland, which eight years before had been followed by the party under John Donelson.

Building a stout flat-boat upon the Holston, he embarked in it with his family, consisting of his wife, five sons and four daughters, on the 4th of May, 1788. With him also were five young men going out to settle in the new country, and several negro servants. Two of his sons were grown to manhood, and all of the men had rifles, and were good marksmen, and, in addition, in the stern of the boat was mounted a swivel. Thus well armed, the party felt little apprehension of danger from the Indians, though they knew that at the time the Creeks and Cherokees were waging a war of extermination against the French Broad settlers. But this was a private conflict between the savages and John Sevier, in which neither North Carolina nor the United States took any interest. It is probable that Colonel Brown for this reason concluded that the Chickamaugas would not mo-



lest a peaceable voyager, who had no connection with, and did not so much as know, the "Great Eagle of the pale-faces."

At dawn of the fifth day of his voyage, Colonel Brown passed the Indian towns at the mouth of Chickamauga Creek, and a little after sunrise was abreast of Tuscagee, a small place opposite the present site of Chattanooga. There a canoe put out from the shore, and approached within short hailing distance of the flat-boat. In it were four warriors, one—evidently a chief—an ugly-visaged savage of huge proportions, who spoke to Colonel Brown in English, and asked to be permitted to come on board his boat. Suspecting no harm, the colonel consented, and the savage after some friendly conversation sprang again into his canoe, and paddled to the shore whence he came. This was Cutleotoy, the same who four years later made his appearance as a spy on the Cumberland.

The treacherous savage at once dispatched swift messengers down the river, to apprise the lower towns of the approach of the boat, and with orders to plunder it of its contents, and murder its occupants. This was done. When the boat arrived abreast of Nick-a-jack, one of the lower towns, it was suddenly surrounded by a dozen canoes, each one containing about ten warriors. By stratagem some of the savages succeeded in boarding the boat; and then ensued one of those tragedies so often enacted in that dreary solitude, where a kind of spectral horror still seems to brood over the desolate mountain-girt river.

In a few moments the headless body of Colonel Brown had sunk to the bottom of the Tennessee, and his older sons, and the five other young men, lay dead or dying upon the shore. The mother, the younger children, and the negro servants, were made prisoners.

The captor of Joseph was a young half-breed brave named Chia-chatt-alla, the son of a renegade white man by an Indian woman. His Indian wife being dead, this white man had married a wretched Frenchwoman, who, taken captive near Mobile when a child, had been brought up and married among the Chickamaugas. She had become, as was often the case with white captives, more degraded than the native Indians. Joseph was placed in charge of the father of Chia-chatt-alla, who led him away to his cabin, while his captor returned to secure his share of the plunder of the boat. "The old man" he writes,\* "looked much like a half-breed, though he claimed to be English or American. His name was Tunbridge," and his son was, by the whites, called Tom Tunbridge. "It was this Chia-chatt-alla, or Tom Tunbridge, who claimed me as his prisoner, and had committed me to the charge

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\* At the request of General Zollicoffer, of Nashville, Brown wrote out a full narrative of his captivity, and it is copied into Ramsey's "Annals of Tennessee," pp. 509-515. He subsequently, at the age of eighty-six, gave a narrative, supplementary to the first, to the Tennessee Historical Society. The two accounts I have here combined, with, to make the narrative clear, additional facts gleaned from other sources.

of his father. He intended I should make corn for the old people, and serve them as a son.

“I had been at the old man’s house only fifteen or twenty minutes, when a very large, corpulent old squaw came in, the sweat falling in big drops from her face, who appeared very angry, and often looked at me with a most threatening countenance. They afterward told me that she complained of their attempt to save my life ; that they had done very wrong in taking me away, for I was large enough to notice everything, and would escape, and some day pilot an army there, and destroy them all. I did not then consider this prophetic, or ever likely to come to pass ; but it did.” The old squaw “went on to say that all the rest were killed, and that her son would be there directly and would kill me, she knew.”

The old squaw’s son was Cutleotoy. It was not long before he arrived at the cabin, and demanded to know if there was a white man there. “No,” said Tunbridge, who stood in the doorway, as if to prevent his entrance ; “there is a bit of a white boy.” “The Indian replied that he knew how big I was, and that I must be killed. The old white man pleaded for my life, saying it was a pity to kill women and children ; but the Indian used the same argument that his mother had employed, that I would get away, and when I grew up pilot an army there, and have them all killed. Tunbridge was a British deserter, who had come to America before the Revolutionary War, and had deserted several times, and got at length into the Cherokee nation, where he had lived

eighteen years, and with this wife sixteen years. When Cutleotoy insisted on killing me, old Tunbridge told him I was his son's prisoner, and he was still in town, and that I must not be killed. No greater insult could be offered Cutleotoy, for he was a great man, and did as he pleased usually ; while Tunbridge's son was only twenty-two years old, and a perfect boy in Cutleotoy's estimation. Incensed at this insult, he came to Tunbridge with his knife drawn and tomahawk raised, and asked him if he was going to be the Virginian's friend ; in fact, he would have killed him instantly, had Tunbridge admitted it. But Tunbridge said ' No,' and, stepping back from the door-sill into the house, spoke for the first time in English, ' Take him along.'

"Cutleotoy, who was a very large, strong Indian, followed in a rage, and came to me with his knife and tomahawk both drawn. But the old woman begged him not to kill me in her house. To this he agreed, and, catching me by the hand, jerked me up, and out of the house. Outside were ten of his men surrounding the house-door, and one had in his hand the scalp of one of my brothers, and another that of the other men, on a stick. Some had their guns cocked, and others their knives and tomahawks drawn, ready to put me to death. I requested Tunbridge to beg them to let me have one half hour to pray, to which he replied that it was not worth while. The old Frenchwoman followed me out, and begged for my life. They spurned her away. Then they pulled me to one side, and began to strip off my clothes, that

they might not be blooded at my slaughter. The old woman begged them not to kill me there, nor in the road that she carried water along, for the road passed by her spring. They answered that they would take me to Running-Water town, as there were no white people there, and would have a frolic knocking me over. All this was said in Indian, however, and I knew nothing of what they discussed.

“As soon as my clothes were off, I fell on my knees, and cried, like the dying Stephen, ‘Lord Jesus, into thy hands I commend my spirit,’ expecting every moment to be my last. The old woman continued her entreaties. Finally, she happened to use the proper argument. She asked Cutleotoy if he took any of the white men prisoners. He could not say he did. She replied : ‘This is none of your prisoner. He belongs to my son, Chia-chatt-alla. He will avenge the death.’

“Some of the Indians who had come with Cutleotoy, then said that he had captured a negro woman, and sent her up to Tuscagee already. This aroused the foster-mother, who commenced more vehemently to reproach him, and then to threaten that, if he killed me, her stepson, Chia-chatt-alla, would kill the negro woman. The other Indians by this time joined with the woman, saying that Chia-chatt-alla would be sure to do as she had said. And well Cutleotoy might fear him, for, although he was only twenty-two years old, Chia-chatt-alla had taken the lives of six white men. Now, the thought of my being one day a man, and leading an army there, and



having them killed, had given way to avarice, for both Cutleotoy and his mother wanted the service of the negro woman.

“As I knew nothing of what they were saying, I was still on my knees, trying to give my soul to God, through the merits of the Saviour, and expecting the tomahawk every moment. At length, the favor given to Stephen in his dying moments came to my mind, how he saw the heavens opened, and the blessed Saviour sitting at the right hand of God. I opened my eyes, and, looking up, saw one of the Indians, as they stood all around me, smile ; and then, glancing my eyes round on them, I saw that all their countenances were changed from vengeance and anger to mildness. This gave me the first gleam of hope.

“Cutleotoy then called to old Tunbridge to come after me, that he loved me, and would not kill me ; the other Indians, however, explained the reason of his sudden love to me : it was the negro he loved so much. The old squaw, his mother, said she would have some of my hair anyhow, and, coming behind me, loosed my hair ; it was customary then for young people to wear their hair long ; and gathering a lock from the crown of my head, with an old dull knife, she cut off a parcel, and kicked me in the side, calling me a poor Virginian. . . . My pantaloons were then restored to me, and I was permitted to return to the cabin.” Naturally, the boy’s heart overflowed with gratitude to the Frenchwoman, who had saved his life. He regarded her as an angel



of mercy ; but gradually she lost in his eyes some of her angelic attributes, and they disappeared altogether when one day she told him that she hated the pale-faces, and had saved his life only that he might haul her wood, plant her corn, and dig her potatoes.

“The head-man of Nick-a-jack was away that day at a beloved town (city of refuge) sixteen miles off, called Stecoyee. I understood that he was much displeased with their conduct, for he was a man of fine mind, and boasted that he had never stained his knife in the blood of a white man. . . . His name was Breath. He sent for me the second day after I was taken, and warned me that some of them would kill me, if I was not put into a family, with my hair trimmed like an Indian’s, and my face painted. He also said that, as his was one of the strongest families in the nation, he would receive me into it, directing me to call him ‘uncle,’ and poor Job (Chia-chatt-alla), ‘brother.’ On the same day, the 11th of May, 1788, he bored holes in my ears, cut off my hair, leaving only a scalp-lock on the top of my head, and taking off my pantaloons, gave me a flap and short shirt, pulling open the collar and putting a small brooch in my bosom.

“Then I returned to Tunbridge’s cabin, who also told me I was one of his family, must call him ‘uncle,’ and Tom Tunbridge, ‘brother.’ On the next day I was turned out to hoe corn in the broiling sun. By noon, my forehead and ears, and the back of my head, and my neck and thighs, were all blistered with the heat ; but

the Lord was good, and, when I was sick with sunburns, sent a thunder-cloud and drove us all out of the field. The next day it rained all day, and the third day I was able to go to the field again."

After this he did all sorts of slavish work in heat and cold, often fainting with fatigue and hunger, and sick at heart with thinking of his wretched mother, and his hapless little brother and sisters, captives, he knew not where, among those ruthless savages. But at length he learned that two of his sisters, aged five and ten, were in the family of a Spanish trader in the same town of Nick-a-jack, and that the trader's wife was willing he should visit them. This he did, and there learned that his mother, a younger brother, aged nine, and two younger sisters, had been sent away to the Creek towns on the Tallapoosa River; and all but one of the captured negroes to the Cherokee towns among the Smoky Mountains. He did not then know that his mother had endured almost incredible hardships, been driven on foot by the Creeks two hundred miles, and not allowed to stop to take the gravel from her shoes, though her feet were blistering and suppurating; and that at her journey's end she had been subjected to the brutality of a Creek chief, who had made her his slave.

When the boy thought calmly of his own situation, and of that of his mother and little brother and sisters, the prospect seemed hopeless; but still there kept continually recurring to him the words of Cutletoy and his old hag of a mother: "He is old enough to notice every-

thing, and some day he will escape, and pilot an army here, and destroy us all!" Again and again the words came to him, till it became his controlling thought that his life had been saved that he might be the instrument of bringing a just retribution upon the Chickamaugas.

This idea fixed in his mind, he went about his heavy tasks cheerfully, but keeping his eyes and ears widely open. He learned the Cherokee language, and was docile and obedient, in order to gain the confidence of his captors, and thereby discover the secret haunts to which they fled when Sevier swept down upon them like a whirlwind. The old chief Breath, lived near the now famous cave of Nick-a-jack, and Joseph was often sent to him on errands; and there he learned that this cavern was the principal hiding-place of the Chickamaugas when hard pressed by their enemies. Two hundred men posted at its entrance could, he was told, defy an assault from ten thousand, and the cave was spacious enough to shelter the whole Cherokee nation. Evidently, the only way to fight the Chickamaugas was to approach their strongholds from the west, and thus cut off their retreat to this cavern.

Joseph was satisfied that he had discovered the secret that would destroy the Chickamaugas, and earnestly he now longed for deliverance from his captivity. He was patient, but as the winter approached his tasks grew almost too hard to bear. "I suffered very much," he says, "from the cold, and my exposure in cutting wood,

and taking care of a few cattle and horses. I had to hunt after them in the cane and wood, and over the rough and steep hills, almost mountains. I heard that General Sevier, old 'Chucky Jack,' as the Indians called him, was fighting the Indians, and destroying their towns at a fearful rate.\* The Indians had a great reverence for him, and yet a great dread of his mode of warfare." At last he heard "that the 'old general' had surprised the towns on Coosa River (in Georgia), killed a large number of warriors, and captured forty or fifty of their women and children. Thereupon the Indians proposed an exchange of prisoners. Here was my chance for deliverance. They, however, opposed my exchange, on the score of my coming from North Carolina. They said the East Tennesseans had no right to demand me. But the head-man of the Indians (on the Coosa River) said that Governor Sevier 'was so contrary that he could do nothing with him'; that he, the Governor, had possession of his daughter, and therefore I must be released.

"In a few weeks more there was a runner sent after us to come to Running-Water town, and when we reached Nick-a-jack town, I found there the Indian who had my little sister, having just returned from his hunt, bringing his wife and my little sister. The old squaw seemed to think as much of her as though she had been

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\* An account of this raid of Sevier's on the Coosa is given in "John Sevier, the Commonwealth-Builder," p. 195.

her own child. The little girl was stripped of all her finery, it is true ; but she was only five years old, and when I told her I was going to take her to her own mother, she ran to the old Indian woman, and caught her round the neck, so that I had to take her by force, and carry her twenty or thirty yards. Then, telling her that she should go to see her own mother, I set her down, and led her by the hand. My eldest sister was at another place, a child of ten years old.

“ We got to Running Water about three o’clock, and found that the head-man from the upper towns had come after us. The old head-man of Nick-a-jack (Breath) grumbled at giving us up, as we did not belong to Holston. The old Indian who had come for us said that was all true, but that Little John (their name for Governor Sevier) was so mean and ugly that he could do nothing with him. This word ugly is their hardest term of abuse. He went on to say that ‘ Little John ’ declared he would not let one of their people free, unless he got all the whites who were in the nation, naming those taken from the boat particularly. This settled it, and my exchange followed, as well as that of my two sisters. I was indebted to Governor Sevier for my liberty, as also were my two sisters for theirs. We got back to the residence of an uncle in Pendleton County, South Carolina, after a captivity of eleven months and fifteen days. At this time my weight was only eighty pounds, though I was in my seventeenth year.”

But his mother, and little brother and sisters, were



still captives among the Creeks, and, having none of that nation among his prisoners, Sevier could do nothing to secure their liberation. Mrs. Brown's treatment by her captor soon became so intolerable that she fled for protection to McGillivray, and it is a pleasure to state that the Creek chief now showed himself possessed of the common feelings of humanity. He ransomed the unhappy woman from her savage owner, and soon afterward did a like service to her daughters. Then he sent them to their friends in South Carolina, refusing all compensation for his kind offices, and promising to restore the little son as soon as he could prevail upon his owner to allow him to be liberated. This he at length succeeded in doing, and thus showed that, though he might be "very far gone from original righteousness," he was not "wholly given over to evil."

Once more among friends and with his mother, and brother and sisters about him, Joseph Brown grew rapidly in strength, and before he was nineteen had attained to the stature of manhood. He was far away from savage life, in an old and well-ordered community; but yet those words of Cutleotoy were ever in his mind, and still he dreamed of one day being the instrument of the vengeance of God upon the accursed slayers of so many of his kindred. But he kept his thoughts to himself, for experience had taught him to be silent, and patient and wary. So he waited till he had grown to the stature of manhood, before he proposed to his mother to carry out his father's intention of settling on their lands in the



vicinity of Nashville. This done he would be within striking distance of the Chickamaugas.

They traveled overland to the Cumberland, and on his father's lands, two miles west of Nashville, the boy, not yet nineteen, built a cabin, and assumed the duties of head of the family. Soon the Chickamaugas were marauding over the country ; and early on the morning of October 1, 1792, word was brought to him that they were besieging Buchanan's Station, about five miles away. Seizing his rifle he hurried to the fort, and there at the gateway, as I have related, he came upon the lifeless body of the man at whose hands he had borne so much wrong and indignity—Chia-chatt-alla.

Now the youth thought himself old enough to take a part in the bloody drama that was being enacted everywhere about him. He joined in the fruitless pursuit of the savages after the attack at Buchanan's, and, either in going or returning, came in contact with Robertson, and told him that he knew the secret fastnesses of the Chickamaugas, and could guide an army to their rear which might effect their destruction. Robertson heard him gladly, but shook his head, saying he could do nothing. The orders of Government were imperative that both he and Sevier should act strictly upon the defensive, and under no circumstances again invade the Indian country. Spain was in close alliance with the Creeks and Cherokees. An attack upon them might provoke a collision with her, and for that the infant republic was not prepared, while all the wisdom and prudence of Washing-

ton were required to avoid another war with Great Britain.

Denied thus the work on which his heart was set, young Brown volunteered in Captain Rains's corps of rangers, and for the time devoted himself to the defense of the settlements.

## CHAPTER XL.

### SPANISH MACHINATIONS.

FOR two more years there was mourning in every household along the Cumberland—mothers weeping for sons, and wives for husbands, who had gone out in the morning hale and strong, only to be borne back at night, scalped and mutilated by the savages. The prowling miscreants were beside every spring and hid in every canebrake. If a stump were left standing within range of a station, an Indian rifle was there, to greet the settler with death on his going forth in the morning. The fields lay waste, for it was no longer safe to till the ground, or even to give the cattle necessary attention. The whole settlement was housed in fortified stations, and intercourse between neighbors was carried on only by patrols, or under their protection. It becoming necessary for Robertson to meet the Governor, he had to make the eight days' journey to Knoxville with an escort of twelve men, heavily armed, and mounted on the fleetest horses in the district. Such a reign of terror had not existed since the early days of the colony.

Perhaps five Indians fell for every one of the settlers ; but, still, the losses were severe enough to have led any people but these, and any leader except Robertson, to the total abandonment of the settlements. The "Knoxville Gazette," which had been established in 1791, devoted a column regularly to disasters on the Cumberland, and in every issue, after September, 1793, in leaded type, appeared in it the following paragraph : "The Creek nation must be destroyed, or the southwestern frontiers, from the mouth of St. Mary's to the western extremities of Kentucky and Virginia, will be incessantly harassed by them. *Delenda est.*" The deaths had, not infrequently, numbered ten in a fortnight. Not a score were now left alive of the two hundred and fifty-six original settlers, who, in 1780 signed the first "compact of government" in the fort at Nashville. After diligent inquiry I can ascertain only fifteen, and their names are herewith given, as worthy of mention for the heroic fortitude with which, for twelve years, they had stood their ground while death and havoc were all around them. The names are, James Robertson, John Rains, John Donelson Jr., Isaac Bledsoe, Casper Mansker, John Blackmore, Andrew Ewing, Samson Williams, Thomas Edmeston, Mereday Rains, Jacob and Abraham Castleman, Daniel Radcliff, John Montgomery, and John Cowan. David Hood is the only one of the original number who is recorded as having, after the first year, died a natural death. Doubtless others made as peaceful an exit from that furnace

of fire ; but the vast majority went out of this world while engaged in a life-and-death struggle with a savage enemy. And what is singular is, that the fifteen survivors were among those who had most freely exposed themselves to danger, and been most conspicuous in the defense of the settlements. But unmoved amidst that human holocaust stood that man of iron, Robertson, not seeing the end, not knowing but he might be cut down in the struggle, but resolved to hold his post because the duty had been laid upon him by the great Overruler.

It is not pleasant to read of deeds of human slaughter, nor is it an agreeable task to write about them. I would gladly omit them altogether, and shall do so, except so far as may be necessary to afford a true picture of the time, and a correct portrayal of the characters in this history.

The first name on this year's roll of death is that of Evan Shelby, that brother of Isaac Shelby who received the British commander's sword at King's Mountain. He had settled on the Cumberland when his elder brother removed to Kentucky. He was returning from the Falls of the Ohio (Louisville), when his boat was waylaid by the savages, and he and all those with him, except his brother Moses, were killed. The next name of note is that of Isaac Bledsoe, the long-time friend of Robertson, and one of the earliest explorers and settlers on the Cumberland. He had gone just outside of his station, in the early morning, and was shot down before the

eyes of his wife and children. Not long afterward a son of his brother was killed in a similar manner; and then another son of Anthony, and a son of Isaac, as they were returning from school with a faithful negro. The negro was made a captive, but the boys, resisting stoutly, were inhumanly butchered. Soon after these murders the widow of Anthony Bledsoe was pursued and fired at when passing under escort from one station to another. She was saved by the scout Castleman, who heroically kept the party of savages at bay till she was out of range of their bullets.

The next blow was to fall upon Castleman. Three of his brothers were killed, and one was wounded, all at one time, and within sight of his station, a short distance from Nashville. Robertson still enjoined upon the settlers a defensive warfare, and the "resignation and forbearance inculcated by the Government," but Castleman now demanded permission to carry the war into the enemy's country. Sympathizing with his losses, Robertson allowed him to take his own measures for retaliation. Hastily gathering fifteen volunteers he pursued the marauding party as far as the Tennessee, but failing to come up with them, or to "kill any Indians worth naming," he proposed to his little company to cross the river and invade the Indian villages. Ten of the men declined the hazardous enterprise, and turned their faces homeward. The rest—"five brave fellows, all good shots"—painted and disguised as savages, went with Castleman. They crossed the Tennessee near the town of



Nick-a-jack, intending to proceed to a smaller town lower down the river, but before they had gone far they came upon a party of fifty Creeks seated carelessly upon the ground, arrayed in war-paint, and evidently about to go upon the war-path. Castleman and his men were so well disguised that no hostile intention was suspected by the Creeks till they had come within short rifle range. Then the veteran scout and his five companions leveled their rifles, took deliberate aim, and fired into the circle of savages. Six of the Indians fell dead, two at one discharge of Castleman's gun, which was double-shotted for the occasion. The savages broke at once into the woods, panic-stricken at the sudden and unexpected fire, and in the confusion the little party of whites made their way across the Tennessee, and thence rapidly homeward. To appreciate the boldness of this exploit it needs to be understood that it was performed in the very heart of the Chickamauga towns, where not less than two thousand warriors were within short rallying distance.

An achievement quite as heroic was about this time performed by William Hall, the friend of Anthony Bledsoe, at Greenfield Station. The station was the ordinary stockade inclosing a few log-houses, in which five white men, four negroes, and about twenty women and children, had their homes. It being the planting season, the negroes went daily to work in the adjacent fields, under guard of two or three of the whites as sentinels and lookouts, and all assembled at night in the station

for protection. On this occasion a large party of Indians had before day formed an ambuscade in the woods near the fort, and between it and the cleared fields. The negroes went out early to their work, and the savages allowed them to remain unmolested until they were about to attach their horses to the plows. Then they arose from ambush, and, sounding the unearthly war-whoop, discharged their guns upon the negroes. Hall, and his four companions, were in the fort with their rifles loaded, and, hearing the war-whoop, they rushed out upon the rear of the savages. Hall had lost a father and two brothers, and one of his companions a father, mother, and also two brothers, at the hands of the Indians, and they were nerved for a desperate encounter. The odds were twenty to one against them, but, not pausing to count their numbers, they sounded the Tennessee yell, and rushed upon the savages, discharging their rifles. Disconcerted by the sudden attack, the Indians fell back to a fence, behind which they made a stand, having discovered the small number of their assailants. Meanwhile the whites had reloaded, and, shouting back to the defenseless women and children at the station, "Come on, twenty of you, and we'll fix them!" they poured upon them again the contents of their rifles, killing four of the savages. It is probable that some of the Indians understood the words, for they at once fell back, and made good their retreat with the settlers' horses, and their own killed and wounded. One of the

whites was killed, and one of the negroes mortally wounded.

The next blow fell upon Robertson. Murders had been daily committed almost within sight of his station, and soon another of his sons fell by the tomahawk of the savages. Shortly afterward one of his workmen was killed and scalped in a field near his dwelling, and Robertson ordered a party of twenty to pursue the murderers. With them went Jonathan, his oldest son, now a young man of twenty-four, who, says Haywood, "had many a brush with the savages, always returning as good as was sent." They soon struck the trail of the Indians, and discovered that they had with them several horses, probably well laden with stolen property. Their route was southwest, toward the Tennessee, and this convinced the pursuers that they were returning to their homes ; therefore, they pressed rapidly on, to overtake them before they should cross the river. In this they were successful, coming up with the band after a pursuit of a hundred and twenty miles, as they were going into camp for the night on the bank of the Tennessee, where a low ridge juts out into the water. Here they had built a large signal-fire to give notice of their approach to their friends on the opposite side of the river, and were firing off an occasional gun, apparently with the same object.

Approaching cautiously under cover of the cane, young Robertson, and the captain of the volunteers, reconnoitred the encampment. They counted eleven

warriors and five women in the party, so posted that they could be completely hemmed in, with no way of escape except by the river, which there was broad, and deep, and rapid. This much discovered, the two crept back to their men, and all made their beds in the cane till just before the break of day, when they moved silently forward to inclose the savages, a few of the men posting themselves at the water's edge, on either flank, to cut off any who might attempt to escape by the river. Soon some of the savages rose and began to move about, and at this signal the whites discharged their rifles. Two or three of the warriors were shot down as they plunged into the river, the rest fell where they had slept, and with them three of the women, shot down by the bullets aimed at their husbands. "A cleaner sweep than this," says the old chronicle, "had not been made since the country was settled."

Another of Jonathan Robertson's exploits may as well be related, inasmuch as it affords a vivid idea of the state of things then existing around his father's dwelling. He had been but a few days returned from this expedition, when he had what he termed "a very nice little skirmish." With three lads, aged from ten to fourteen, the sons of John Cowan, one of the few survivors of the original settlers, he had gone out on a short hunt in the vicinity of his father's station. He was armed with a rifle, and each of the lads had a shot-gun. They had secured some game, and were returning home through an open wood, when one of the boys observed something

stirring in a near-by clump of bushes, and leveled his gun at the object. His attention attracted by the boy's movement, the quick eye of Robertson detected the gleaming of a rifle-barrel in the edge of the bushes. Calling out, "Indians! To a tree, boys—to a tree!" he took at once to the nearest cover. At the word two of the lads sprang behind two distinct trees, the other lad taking shelter with Robertson. The tree was too small to cover the bodies of both, and, one of the savages firing instantly, the young lad received a ball in his thigh. Thinking him more badly wounded than he was, Robertson told him to "lie low." "I'm not much hurt," said the young hero, straightening himself up, and giving the Indians the contents of his shot-gun. In his anxiety to get a sight upon one of the savages, Robertson exposed his head for an instant, and in that instant an Indian ball passed through his hat just above his ear. His hat fell off, and the slight concussion forced him to take a step forward, but in that position he got a clear view of the Indian, and gave him a bullet. By this time the lad had reloaded his gun, and, catching it up, Robertson sent another bullet among the Indians, and then another, four in rapid succession, the lad loading about as fast as he fired. Meanwhile, the other boys had joined in the firing, and then the Indians broke from cover, and fled toward some thicker undergrowth at a short distance, Robertson and his three young soldiers pursuing and firing upon them, till they were concealed by dense bushes into which it was not prudent to enter.



Then Robertson called off the intrepid boys, and they marched homeward with their game and shot-guns upon their shoulders. In his rapid flight one of the Indians left his gun behind him, and it was observed that several wounded were borne into the undergrowth. A few days afterward the dead bodies of two of the savages were found upon the ground.

But intrepidity among these people was not confined to men and boys; it was possessed in as decided a degree by the women, as was shown in the share they had taken in the heroic defense of Buchanan's Station. Their daily experience of peril brought this quality into constant exercise, and numerous are the instances when their presence of mind and cool courage ward off destruction or disaster from the stations. Did space permit, many such instances might be related; the one I select is peculiar only because of the great age of the heroine. She was known throughout the settlements as "Grandma Hays," and she was the mother of Colonel Robert Hays, a brave and active officer who was out on the Coldwater expedition with Robertson. She lived with another son, Captain Samuel Hays, at what was known as Hays's Fort, which stood about a mile east of the Hermitage, and a short distance south of the Hermitage church. Her older son had married a daughter of John Donelson, and thus was a brother-in-law to Andrew Jackson. Her younger son, Samuel, had gone one spring morning, in 1793, to the station of the younger John Donelson, about two miles distant, and while there,



standing near the gateway, had been shot down by the savages. Soon afterward all of Mrs. Hays's negroes were captured and run off, and she was thus left with not a soul about her but a half-witted cripple, named Tim Dunbar, who cultivated her garden and did the menial offices of the household. One morning in September, when this man was at work just outside the stockade, Mrs. Hays heard the report of several guns, and a moment later Dunbar came rushing into the station, leaving the gate open, and crying out at the top of his voice : " Murder ! I'm killed ! I'm killed ! " Saying this, he fell in a heap upon the floor. " You frightened fool," said Mrs. Hays to him, " you're not hurt. If you were, you couldn't halloo so. Get up, take your gun, and come with me. Be quick, before they have time to reload ! " Thus aroused, the man rose and followed the aged lady to the gateway. Having secured the gate, each of them, rifle in hand, took a position whence they could watch the surrounding woods. Soon they caught sight of a party of Indians secreted in the neighboring undergrowth, and, taking deliberate aim, they gave them the contents of their rifles. The Indians responded by a general discharge, which wounded only the walls of the station. They kept this up for a time ; but Mrs. Hays deigned no reply, reserving her fire for a nearer approach of the savages. This they did not attempt, being probably deceived as to the strength of the garrison. The firing was heard by the neighbors, and, thinking " Grandma Hays " to be in danger, they hurried to her relief, but before they could

arrive the Indians had departed. The fire of the old lady and her servant probably wounded some of the savages, for blood-stains were found among the underbrush into which they discharged their rifles. It was with difficulty that the neighbors prevailed upon Mrs. Hays to then abandon her castle, and take up more secure quarters at Mansker's Station.

The young man, Joseph Brown, soon had some experience of Indian warfare. He had occasion to visit the Holston settlements, and, the road being infested with Indians, he timed his return so as to be accompanied by the mail-rider, Thomas Ross, and Colonel Caleb Friley. They journeyed in safety till on the evening of the third day, when they were approaching the east bank of the Little Laurel River. Here they were suddenly fired upon by a considerable body of savages from the two sides of the hunters' trace they were pursuing. Putting spurs to their horses they dashed into the river, and got away in safety. They were proceeding at a slower pace, and congratulating themselves upon their fortunate escape, when they rode unexpectedly into the midst of a still larger body of savages. At once they were targets for scores of rifles. Ross was instantly killed, and Friley and Brown wounded, the latter in the arm, and so severely that for long afterward the limb was useless, and splinters of exfoliated bone discharged themselves from the shoulder.

These mail-riders led a most precarious existence. A

few weeks after the death of Ross, Nathaniel Teal arrived at Nashville with the mail from Natchez. Having delivered his bags at the office, he rode out and spent the night with Robertson, at his station, five miles from Nashville. Returning on the following morning, he was waylaid and killed by the Indians when less than a mile from Robertson's dwelling. Two companies of horsemen were at once dispatched in pursuit of the savages, and, though his wound was still unhealed, young Brown was among the first to volunteer for the expedition. At the end of five days the savages were come up with on the northern bank of the Tennessee. Alarmed by the sound of the approaching horsemen, they scattered into the neighboring canebrakes, and only six were killed, but one of these fell by a shot from young Brown's rifle.

The foregoing incidents afford an imperfect impression of the state of things then existing along the Cumberlandland; but they give no idea of the number of lives lost in the conflict. This can not be stated with accuracy, but it is safe to say there was a death in nearly every household. It is not strange that the people chafed at the policy of the Government, which restricted them from pursuing offensive measures, the only warfare that would put a stop to the raids of the savages. The discontent was universal, and, had not Robertson been a fellow-sufferer with the rest, it is not conceivable how he could have restrained the fury of the people. As it was, they daily clamored to be led to the destruction of the

Chickamaugas. From every little hamlet where ten men could be got together, they sent up petitions to this effect to Robertson. "We are loyal to the authority of Congress," they said, "but Congress can not know the wrongs we endure ; if it did, it would allow no fear of Spain to hold us back from vengeance on our savage enemies." One of these petitions, which expresses the sentiments of them all, is here subjoined. It shows the firm regard of these people for law, and their desire to submit to it, even under the terrible provocations they daily endured. It was addressed to Robertson as commandant of the district. It says :

"Your petitioners, having convened together at the request of the distressed part of Tennessee County, in order to set forth their grievances and to pursue some method for their relief, beg leave to represent to you, sir, that they have much to dread from the Indians as the spring season approaches. The recent murders and ravages committed by them on our frontiers too evidently prove their intentions in this quarter. We already feel the effects of the navigation of the river being shut up, by which means we shall be deprived of the very necessary article, salt, that article having already risen in its price. Immigration to this country by water must frequently cease. We also beg leave to assure you that the frontiers will break up unless some speedy method is taken to secure them from the inroads of the savages, which must be followed by the most fatal consequences. We are much afraid, sir, that Government has not vested

their officers in this country with authority to carry an expedition against any nation or village of Indians. Yet we are confident that something must be done with the Indians that do the mischief on our frontiers. We are willing to pursue every lawful means to procure peace and tranquillity among us. Therefore, we beg leave to suggest to you . . . to make a full representation of our distressed situation and grievances to Governor Blount. . . . We have confidence that you will do all in *your* power to relieve the distresses of the people under your command."

Robertson fully sympathized with these appeals from the settlers. Previous to the receipt of these petitions, he had proposed to resign his position in the United States Army, in order that he might be free to conduct an offensive war against the savages, and destroy the towns whence the marauders proceeded; but to this suggestion the Governor had replied: "I notice what you say about your resignation, and the object of it; delay it, the time is not yet." Then again he enjoined upon his friends and neighbors, patience. He reminded them that North Carolina had long treated them in a worse way, but they had survived it; that the machinery of government was yet new, and the settlements were at a great distance from the central power; and they were enjoying many advantages they had not known before the organization of the territorial government.

"There seemed a combination of influences within



the United States against affording aid in men or money to these besieged settlements. The Treasury Department greatly dreaded expenditures. The War Department was making preparations for another grand army in the Northwestern Territory. The Department of State watched with keenest eye our foreign and domestic affairs, and was exceedingly distrustful of, and opposed to, every appropriation and measure which might embarrass negotiations then pending, or accumulate difficulties in the way of such as it was desired to engage in at some not very distant day."\*

The principal obstacle arose from the State Department, for the settlers could have dispensed with aid in either men or money, and made no complaint at the withdrawal of the small force of Government troops when their term of service expired in October, 1792. They only asked to be themselves allowed to invade the Indian country. This Government refused, because the State Department was cajoled by the deceitful diplomacy of the Spaniards into the belief that the United States could soon peaceably acquire the navigation of the Mississippi, but which it is now known Spain had no intention of granting on any conceivable conditions. As late as March 8, 1803, Daniel Clark, who was in the confidence of the Spanish officials, wrote to James Madison, then Secretary of State, that "expectations of assistance from ourselves against our own Government have been

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\* Putnam's "History of Middle Tennessee," p. 407.



always relied on by the Spaniards, and they have constantly looked to a division of our Western States from our General Government."\* In these expectations the Spaniards were encouraged by the treasonable representations of General Wilkinson, now an officer of the United States Army, but still in active correspondence with Gayoso, and the Baron de Carondelet, who had succeeded Miro as Governor of Louisiana. Hence, there was no hope of Spain concluding a satisfactory treaty with the United States. She was merely holding "the word of promise to the ear," till Western events should be ripe for the dismemberment of the Union.

In the summer of 1793, intelligence came to the Cumberland of an event which, it was at first supposed, would lessen the savage warfare that was waged against the settlements. This was the death of McGillivray, which had occurred in the Creek nation in the previous February. His loss was greatly deplored by the Spaniards, who regarded him as a most efficient instrument for their purposes. As early as April, 1786, Navarro had written to the Spanish ministry, "So long as we shall have this chief on our side, we may rely on having established, between the Floridas and Georgia, a barrier which it will not be easy to break through." This barrier would, doubtless, have now been broken down, and the coalition which McGillivray had succeeded in forming with the Cherokees and Shawnees have fallen to pieces, had not

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\* Quoted in Wilkinson's "Memoirs," vol. ii, p. 140.

Miro been succeeded by Carondelet, a far more energetic man, and much less scrupulous as to the means he used for Spanish aggrandizement.

This gentleman no sooner assumed his office on December 30, 1791, than he set zealously to work to form new alliances with the savages, and to strengthen the old ones ; and from doing this he was not deterred by the fact that he was thereby invading the rights and prerogatives of the American Government. The Indians dreaded the rapid advance of the Americans, and their constant fear was that they might at some future time strip them of their lands. It became now one of the chief points of Spanish policy to keep this fear alive, and to excite among the savages jealousy, distrust, and hatred of the Americans, and to inspire them with the feeling that "the great king of the Spains" could and would protect them against their encroachments. This Carondelet said in express terms to Indians occupying American territory, and he further conciliated their good-will by large donations to the tribes, and regular pensions to the most influential of the chieftains. Had Spain been at open war with the United States, he could not have proceeded in any more hostile manner. The result was, that the savages came to regard the Americans as their natural enemies, and to look to the King of Spain as their legitimate protector.

The sense of wrong felt by the savages made them as tinder to which a spark only need be applied to produce a conflagration. McGillivray was no sooner dead, than

Carondelet applied this spark by sending his agents among the Cherokees. The Creek chief had been the active manager for Spain, but now the Spanish Governor assumed personal control of affairs with the savages, and they lost nothing in energy by the change of directors. Within less than two months from the death of McGillivray, the Spanish agents got together a grand council of the Cherokees, from which proceeded the following talk addressed to Gayoso, the Governor of Natchez. The paper was, of course, of Spanish concoction, but it was signed and adopted as their own by the principal chiefs of the Cherokees. Its sole purpose was to commit the whole nation to an active warfare upon Robertson.

The paper first complains bitterly of the ungenerous method by which, it said, the Americans had appropriated to themselves the dwelling-lands of the Indians, and then says : "The passion of the Americans for establishing themselves on the lands of the Indians is too well known to you to need explanation. In a word, since they, by fraudulent means, have usurped the lands of the Indians, the nation universally *reclaims* and insists to preserve its *ancient limits* on which they agreed with the British. They pray you to employ all your force to obtain from his Majesty this favor, if it be possible ; and if it can not be obtained, they *insist that the settlement at Cumberland shall be removed at all events*. Without this, nothing will satisfy the Cherokees and Talpuches [Creeks].

“Cumberland was settled toward the conclusion of the last war by a certain Robertson, and some companions of his, who, concealing their journey and designs, took possession by force of those lands. Perhaps the Americans will make it appear that they possess them by free and lawful treaties ; but it is not so. . . .

“Robertson and his companions are the real and true cause that so much blood has been spilled ; and the confusion which has subsisted, and still subsists, is owing entirely to this settlement ; and while it remains in this place there is no hope of a solid peace.

“This settlement taken away, the Cherokee nation declares that it does not desire to be an enemy of the Americans ; it declares, moreover, that it does not entertain this solicitude from caprice or pique ; and that they never questioned the legality of their treaties under the British Government.”

Carondelet had now engaged the Cherokees in the fight against Robertson. It only remained to bring the Choctaws and Chickasaws into the savage coalition to girdle the Cumberland settlements with a fire in which they would be inevitably consumed, unless rescued by speedy aid from the United States. And of this aid what hope was there ? Was not the Government still restrained by fear of Spain ; and also was it not at that very moment, mustering all its available strength, under Wayne, for an attack on the Northwestern Indians ? Piomingo had withstood all the blandishments of the Spaniards, and for years had remained the firm friend of

the Cumberland settlers. There was no hope of detaching him from Robertson. Therefore dissension and division must be sown among his people, and they, if not he, be won over to the Spaniards. To this end Carondelet now applied the most approved Spanish diplomacy. He seduced a prominent Chickasaw chief, named Ugu-layacabe, the wolf's friend, by an annual pension of five hundred dollars,\* to organize within the nation a party in opposition to Piomingo, and at the same time he incited the Creeks to make war upon the Chickasaws.

The Creeks began hostilities at once by entering the Chickasaw country, stealing the horses, and taking the lives of a few of the mountain leader's warriors. Hearing of this, Robertson wrote Piomingo in a tone of encouragement, and to this the Chickasaw king replied by a letter signed by himself and twenty-nine of his principal chiefs. In this letter Piomingo says: "We headmen have held you fast by the hand, and have told our young warriors to do the same; and they will, so long as they are able to lift a hatchet. We have sent you a war-club. When we both take hold we can strike a hard blow. . . . Our agreement was to be as one man in regard to our enemies and friends. The Creeks say, all the Virginians are liars, and no dependence is to be placed in them, and that we Chickasaws are fools. Their talk

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\* Statement of Daniel Clark to Secretary Madison, quoted in Wilkinson's "Memoirs," vol. ii, p. 141.



does not alter us. Speak strong to your young warriors ; let us join to teach the Creeks *what war is*. You make whisky—send us some ; it is good to take a little at war-talks.

“We believe the Choctaws will join us, and not our enemies. They need ammunition and guns, as well as we ; muskets, rifles, smooth-bore, will do. As we made no crops last year, we are in a starving condition. Send us quickly fifteen hundred bushels of corn, two barrels of flour, one hundred bushels of salt, one hogshead of tobacco, fifty bags of vermilion, as it is greatly needed in war. Do not forget the whisky. And we desire that General Washington will station a garrison at the Muscle Shoals, or Bear Creek.”

Robertson, though of opinion that it was “devilish for Indians,” did not “forget the whisky.” Without a day’s delay he loaded a flat-boat with the desired supplies, and dispatched it under charge of his son Randolph, and a suitable guard, to his good friend Piomin-go, at the Chickasaw Bluffs (Memphis). From the manifest, subsequently furnished to the War Department, it appears that the boat’s cargo consisted of five hundred stand of arms, two thousand pounds of powder, four thousand flints, fifteen hundred bushels of corn, fifty pounds of vermilion, one hundred gallons of whisky, together with an armorer and his tools. The armorer was sent along to man the one solitary brass swivel, which had for so long a time done duty on the fort at Nashville. He was to work it in case of an attack on



the boat, and, on arriving among the Chickasaws, was to instruct them in its management. The supplies arrived safely, and were acknowledged by Piomingo in the following letter, which is still on the files of the United States War Department :

“CHICKASAW NATION, *June 17, 1793.*

“DEAR OLD FRIEND : I have received several letters from you since I was able to answer you, owing to matters being unsettled, as they are here at present. I received the corn and other articles by your son Randolph, for which I thank my brothers, the Americans, for considering us in so great need. Our situation has been such that we could not pass to you as usual. I have sent one man with your son, as he requested, and hope shortly to come in myself. Whether this will ever reach you is uncertain, for I hear the path is watched by Creeks and Cherokees, in order to intercept all messages passing, and I fear your son will never reach Cumberland ; but, if he should be so fortunate as to get in, he can inform you of the circumstances of all matters, as I have made him fully acquainted with all within my knowledge. His being a woodsman, and going on foot, give me hopes he may get in safe. He can inform you of my unsettled situation, which, as soon as I can alter, and get my business arranged, you may be sure of seeing me. I endeavored to prevail with your son to wait longer, until he might go safer, but in vain, as he was anxious to get in to let you know how matters were,

that you might inform Governor Blount ; so he prefers going at the risk of all. I have often told you of the Creeks and Cherokees, which I am sure they will not cease to continue till they feel the weight of the white people, which I hope will not be long. Surely, my friend, if you knew how lightly and despisingly they speak of you and your friends, you could not bear it as you do. If we did not know you to be warriors, we should not know what to think of your calling them friends. We, the Chickasaws, who are but one very small house in the great city, the United States, could not bear to throw away and let the blood of one man pass without retaliation. The Creeks were the aggressors, and asked a cessation of arms of us, as your son can inform you. If you would treat them so, they would not think as little of you. There are very bad talks going on at this time, of which I shall be better able to inform you hereafter. Your son can tell you of seeing Cherokees coming in, which he saw with scalps and war-instruments, to invite us and the Choctaws to join all other Indians to war against the United States. The Spaniards are getting all the Indians they can to a treaty at the Walnut Hills. What their intentions are is uncertain, but, I apprehend, nothing to your advantage, which you will be better able to judge when I arrive ; it will then be in my power to inform you of all that is of consequence. I intend to visit the President when I come in—your son has promised me to go with me. I hope you will not be against it. Please to let Governor

Blount know of it, which will be about four or five weeks. I want you to get Simson to make me a gun like Colonel Masker's. I hope you will take great care of yourself, as both the Creeks and Cherokees will try to get you. Keep out your scouts at a great distance ; it will be best for safety, and not let them hunt near you, as they always do you mischief when breaking up to go home. I am very glad to hear you say that, the President has sent a great warrior to command his army against the Northern tribes if they do not treat. But, my brother, I hardly know what you mean by treating with tribes that are always at war with you, and will be until you whip them ; perhaps you may then have a treaty with them that may keep peace. Did I not tell how the Creeks and Cherokees would behave when they treated ? I said they would pay no regard to what they did ; so you found it. If we confirm a treaty with the Creeks, they will be told every injury done us will be retaliated for, and we will observe to do it.

"I am and will be your friend and brother,

"PIOMINGO.

"GENERAL ROBERTSON."

Young Robertson, on his way down the Mississippi, touched at New Madrid, and was received with a vast deal of polite ceremony by the Spanish commandant, M. Portell. He was, however, no sooner out of sight, than the courteous Spaniard dispatched a canoe down the river to Carondelet, with information that Robertson

was arming the Chickasaws with brass artillery. At once Carondelet conveyed the astounding intelligence to the Spanish minister at Philadelphia, and on the same day expressed his sentiments upon the subject in a letter to Robertson. In this letter, after a number of complimentary remarks, he says: "I have felt the greatest concern on account of the measures taken by you to comply with the request of the Chickasaw nation, sending them such supplies, and at the same time *a little piece*, an arm too dangerous in the hands of Indians. . . . The policy of the United States and of Spain is carefully to conceal from them its use. This has been my conduct toward the Cherokees; and really I have prevailed upon them to stop all hostility against the Cumberland settlements(!). This they will observe, unless forced to take up arms in their own defense."

Then the Governor spoke graciously of "his Catholic Majesty" *mediating* with Congress to fix the Indian boundaries, which, being advantageous to both parties, might prevent further controversy. He had tried this with the Creeks, whom *he had* turned from their hostility to the Georgians(!). He had also refused a supply of arms to the Creeks at Natchez, and to the Chickasaws at Walnut Hills. It was probable, he said, that a general peace would shortly take place, without which the Cumberland colony could not flourish; and, in conclusion, he expressed a desire to meet General Robertson, and to express to him personally the high esteem in which he held him.

In mendacity and impudence this letter rises to the height of sublimity. The presumption of a petty Spanish Governor, in thus addressing an American official, exhibits the low estimation in which this country was held when it first took rank among nations. However, the Spanish gentleman did not overestimate the value to the Chickasaws of that "little piece." In their hands it was to be more potent against the Creeks than a thousand rifles.

Through Piomingo, Robertson had been well informed of the intrigues of Carondelet with the various tribes of savages; but, restraining his indignation, he replied to him with a courtesy which would have done credit to Sevier himself. His letter was as follows:

"MIRO DISTRICT, NASHVILLE, *December 9, 1793.*

"SIR: I had yesterday the honor of receiving yours of the 21st of May, and am happy to find your Excellency's sentiments so congenial with my own, relative to the treatment proper to be given our Indian neighbors. When we reason from general principles, a small degree of reflection will show us the impropriety of enlightened nations furnishing savages, even in time of war, with weapons that a few months may turn against themselves; much more so in a time of peace. This, sir, is however an idea that did not occur to me at the time I sent the piece to the Chickasaws; but that step was merely the effect of an effusion of friendship for them in consequence of their faithful adherence to our interests, and



perhaps will appear less reprehensible when it is considered they were then at open war with the Creeks, who have been our constant and inveterate enemies. I must, however, observe that this was altogether a transaction of *my own*, and must not be charged on our General Government, to which application was made for several more, which was refused.

“I can assure your Excellency that every opportunity has been made use of to impress on the Indians the idea of friendship subsisting between Spain and the United States, and particularly by his Excellency the Governor of this Territory, at a treaty held by authority of the United States with the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations at this place in 1792, and it has been my particular care at every conference to hold out the same idea.

“Various reports have circulated with us of the Spanish Government having incited the Indians to war against us, of which I held it my duty to inform Government; though, at the same time, I knew not how to reconcile this with information I received through the channel of correspondence with several Spanish officers, and other corroborating circumstances, wholly incompatible with such measures, which also I remarked in my representations to Government.

“The establishment of peace is indeed a very important object, especially for our infant countries; and it gives me the greatest pleasure to find the measures of your Government directed to that end, and the more



so that, if sincerely pursued, which I doubt not they are, they can not fail of success.

“The honor of an interview with your Excellency, though it would afford me real satisfaction, is what I rather wish for than expect; yet it may still be in our power to correspond, which I flatter myself will be done.”

It was not long before Ugulayacabe, on his return from a visit to Carondelet, arrived at Nashville, making earnest inquiry if Piomingo had ceded some of the Chickasaw lands to the Americans. Robertson knew of his efforts to stir up opposition to the mountain leader, and, readily discerning his motive in asking this question, he gave him no satisfaction. His distrust of this chief was shared by the Cumberland people, who, having lost all veneration for princelings, insisted upon abbreviating his name into Ugly Cub. However, he appears to have created, by means of Spanish gewgaws, enough of a party among the Chickasaws to secure the adhesion of some of the chiefs to an offensive and defensive alliance which Carondelet soon succeeded in forming with the Cherokees, Creeks, and Shawnees.

By this treaty these several nations formed a confederacy for mutual assistance, binding themselves to act in nothing which had a bearing upon the interest, security, or welfare of any one of the parties, without the consent of all, and the approval of the Governor of Louisiana. And, in return for the aid and protection of Spain, the

Indians agreed to contribute, to the utmost of their power, to maintain "his Catholic Majesty" in possession of the provinces of Louisiana and the two Floridas. When this treaty had been concluded, Carondelet wrote exultingly to the Spanish ministry that he could then, for a trifling annual expenditure, oppose to the Americans an army of twenty thousand Indian warriors.

The Shawnees had resolved upon the destruction of Piomingo, on account of the aid he had given to Saint Clair in his expedition against them in 1791; the Creeks were preparing to begin upon him a war of extermination, because of his faithful adhesion to Robertson; and now a number of his prominent chiefs had been lured from their allegiance by the arts of the Spaniards. All this he knew, and he wrote to Robertson that his situation was desperate, but that he should stand erect, and acquit himself like a true man and a Chickasaw warrior.

This Robertson had from him by a special messenger. By the next express he heard that Piomingo was dead—assassinated in the heart of his own nation, by (it was believed) a Chickamauga warrior. "His death," says the old chronicle, "was much lamented by the people of Cumberland"; but by none was the noble savage so much mourned as by Robertson, who loved and trusted him as if he had been his own brother.

With Piomingo dead, Robertson could not count on a certain continuance of friendly relations with the Choc-taws and Chickasaws. Without their great leader, they

could not be expected to resist the pressure which would be brought to bear upon them by the other nations. Therefore, Robertson had now before him a war with a combination of all the Southwestern Indians. It is clear that at no previous time had his situation been more desperate.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE CHICKAMAUGA EXPEDITION.

FROM Piomingo Robertson received early intelligence of the offensive and defensive alliance which had been formed between the Spaniards and the several Southern tribes, and he fully realized that his only hope of peace now lay in a prompt invasion of the Indian country. This was made more clear to him by a report from James Carey, one of the interpreters for the United States residing with the Cherokees, who said that "the impression generally prevailed with the Indians that the reason why the Americans did not retaliate, but patiently bore the injuries they had received from them, was the posture of their negotiations with foreign powers, and their fear of offending them ; and that, if it was not for this, the Americans certainly would not be offering and begging peace in return for the murders, robberies, and bloodshed, daily committed on their citizens."

Governor Blount appreciated the situation of the Cumberland settlers, and urged upon the Secretary of War the necessity of speedy measures being taken for

their protection. "My apprehensions," he wrote to him, "for those unhappy, exposed, and too defenseless people, are very great and truly distressing. What is to be their future, judging from their past and present impending danger, is a very serious question."\* But it seemed impossible for General Knox to realize the situation. He did not understand why the Creeks and Cherokees did not observe the recent treaties, nor accept the fact that nothing but fear of punishment would restrain them from bloodshed and horse-stealing. He had already withdrawn Major Sharp and his one hundred and ninety men to re-enforce the army forming under Wayne to beat back the Northern Indians; and he now wrote to Governor Blount: "Can not the Indians be appeased by gifts? Have not most of their acts been provoked and done in retaliation? Will not a hundred mounted men, ranging through the woods, and along the dividing ridges and the boundaries to which they have assented, be all that need be done? Is it not most important of all to restrain hunters, spies, and speculators from intrusions upon Indian territory?"

It was idle to argue with such ignorance, and consequently Robertson decided upon a direct application to Congress. When the first Territorial Legislature met at Knoxville, in February, 1794, he induced the members to forward a memorial to that body on the subject. "In it they demanded a declaration of war against the Creeks

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\* "American State Papers," vol. v, p. 436.

and Cherokees ; and stated that, since the treaty of Holston, they had killed, in a most barbarous and inhuman manner, upward of two hundred citizens of the United States, residents in this Territory, without regard to age or sex, and carried others into captivity and slavery, and had robbed the citizens of their slaves, and stolen at least two thousand horses, which, at a moderate calculation, were worth one hundred thousand dollars.\*

“Scarcely is there a man of this body,” said the memorial, “but can recount a dear wife or child, an aged parent or near relation, massacred by the hands of these bloodthirsty nations, in their houses or fields ; nor are our neighbors and friends less miserable. Such have been the sufferings of your fellow-citizens resident in this Territory, more than ought to be imposed on men who, by their joint exertions with the citizens of the United States at large, have achieved freedom and independence.”

By Congress this memorial was referred to a committee, which by its chairman, Mr. Carnes, reported “That, from the representations made to them, the condition of the Territory calls for the most energetic measures, and they recommend that the President shall be authorized to call out an adequate military force to carry on offensive operations against any hostile tribe, and to establish such posts and defenses as may be necessary for the permanent security of the frontier settlers.” And this was

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\* Haywood.



all that was done. Congress adjourned without taking any further action whatever on the subject!

Then Robertson decided upon a direct appeal to Washington. He induced the Territorial Legislature to instruct their representative in Congress to present to him "the additional list of one hundred and five of our fellow-citizens who have suffered by the Creeks and Cherokees since our memorial to Congress in the spring, in addition to the former and cruel acts of hostility with which this Territory has been insulted by those Indians; and to assure his Excellency that if the people of this Territory have borne with outrages which stretch human patience to the utmost, it has been through *our veneration for the head of the Federal Government*, and through the hopes we entertain that his influence will finally extend to procure for this injured part of the Union that justice which nothing but retaliating on an unrelenting enemy can afford."

The reply to this last appeal came to Governor Blount, and he at once conveyed it to Robertson. It was as follows: "With respect to destroying the Lower Towns, however vigorous such a measure might be, or whatever good consequences might result from it, I am instructed specially by the President to say that he does not consider himself authorized to direct any such measure, more especially as the whole subject was before the last Congress, who did not think proper to authorize or direct any *offensive operations*."

This letter Robertson read to his neighbors, and it

only served to increase the war feeling. "Defensive measures!" they exclaimed; "keep at home, and watch, and wait, and allow the creeping savages the first fire! We know what that means. It means more murders of our friends and kindred, and in the end extermination." At the same time came two expresses from George Colbert, a prominent chief of the Chickasaws, with information that a large number of Creeks and Cherokees were embodying to invade the settlements along the Cumberland; that a war of extermination was determined on, and that the agents of Spain urged, and were to aid in, its prosecution.

The Indian murders and outrages continued without abatement, and among the killed were again some of the most prominent citizens. Things had come to a pass when self-preservation became the only law that could be recognized; and, seeing that Congress had done nothing, Robertson now announced to the people that he should at once equip and march a strong force to the destruction of the Chickamauga towns. If his conduct should not be approved by the Government, he would resign, or submit to any punishment that might be inflicted upon him. A few days previously, he had heard that General Logan and Colonel Whitley, two of the most popular leaders in Kentucky, were calling for volunteers to invade the Cherokee country; and that Major Ore, of the United States Army, with sixty men, had been ordered to range the Cumberland Mountains in search of small parties of hostile savages. To these officers he dispatched

expresses requesting them to bring all the troops they could muster to the block-house, two miles east of Buchanan's Station, by August 19th, and then he proceeded to call for volunteers within his own department. This done, he sent for Joseph Brown, and requested him to explore a route practicable for horsemen through the woods to Nick-a-jack. The young man was still suffering from his wound, and was asked to go a distance of more than a hundred miles through a trackless forest, never yet trodden by a white man, and behind whose every tree might lurk a Chickamauga; but with only two or three companions, he set out and returned in safety, carefully blazing a route for the army which was to follow.

The whole country rose at the call of Robertson. More than a thousand men volunteered to go upon the expedition, but no less than three bands of savages were known to be then marauding along the Cumberland, and a considerable force must remain behind to protect the settlements. Colonel Whitley had come in with a hundred men from Kentucky, and Major Ore with the sixty regular troops, whom the Governor had detailed to range the Cumberland Mountains. To these Robertson added such a number of volunteers as brought the whole force up to five hundred and fifty men, all of whom were well armed and well mounted. He was himself still suffering from the wounds in his arm and foot, and not able to endure the exposure and fatigue of such an expedition; therefore, command of the little army was given to Colo-

nel Whitley, a brave man, and much experienced in Indian fighting. However, as Major Ore's force was the only one levied by public authority, it was decided that he should have nominal command, in order to entitle the volunteers to pay from the General Government. On the 30th of August, before the men were fully ready to set out, Robertson wrote the Governor apprising him of the intended expedition, and six days later issued to Major Ore the following marching orders :

"NASHVILLE, *September 6, 1794.*

"MAJOR ORE : The object of your command is, to defend the District of Miro against the Creeks and Cherokees of the lower towns, who I have received information are about to invade it ; and also to punish such Indians as have committed recent depredations. For these objects you will march, with the men under your command, from Brown's Block-house on the 8th instant, and proceed along Taylor's Trace, toward the Tennessee ; and if you do not meet this party before you arrive at the Tennessee, you will pass it, and destroy the lower Cherokee towns, which must serve as a check to the expected invaders ; taking care to spare women and children, and to treat all prisoners who may fall into your hands with humanity, and thereby teach those savages to spare the citizens of the United States under similar circumstances. Should you in your march discover the trails of Indians returning from the commission of recent depredations on the frontiers, which can

generally be distinguished by the horses stolen being shod, you are to give pursuit to such parties, even to the towns from which they came, and punish them for their aggressions in an exemplary manner, to the terror of others from the commission of similar offenses, provided this can be consistent with the main object of your command, as above expressed—the defense of the District of Miro against the expected party of Creeks and Cherokees.

“I have the utmost confidence in your patriotism and bravery ; and, with my warmest wishes for your success,

“I am, sir, your obedient servant,

“JAMES ROBERTSON,

“*Brigadier-General.*”

I need not follow the troops on their toilsome march of a hundred and twenty miles through the unbroken wilderness. They encountered no Indians on the way, and their presence was not discovered when, on the night of the 12th of September, they went into camp on the bank of the Tennessee, directly opposite to the town of Nick-a-jack. The river at this point is three fourths of a mile wide, and the current in places is deep and rapid ; but such was the eagerness of some of the force to get within rifle-range of the savages, that they plunged at once into the stream, and, some on rafts of cane, and some on the backs of their horses, or swimming beside them, made their way across the river. Among these last was young Brown, and the twenty sharp-shooters



who formed his company—for, on account of his zeal and many services, he had already been advanced to a captaincy. There, shielded from the enemy by the tall cane that grew along the bank of the river, they waited in breathless silence for the morning.

With the first streak of dawn the little party which had crossed the river was joined by the larger portion of their comrades, and then silently they moved down upon the Chickamaugas. A scene of havoc and death followed. Taken by surprise, the Indians fled at first in all directions, the larger number toward the river, with intent to gain the cave of Nick-a-jack, or some other inaccessible hiding-place in the near-by mountains. But from these retreats they found themselves cut off by young Brown and his little company, who mowed them down without mercy. Then they turned their steps to the narrow pass between the river and the mountains, which led to the town of Running Water. Here they were met by reinforcements from that town, and, recovering from their panic, made a stand, and fought for a time with desperate bravery. They largely outnumbered the whites, but could not resist their impetuosity, and in half an hour there was not left in either town a solitary Indian warrior. Seventy lay dead upon the ground; the rest had fled by the river, or into the adjacent forest. Then the torch was applied to the two towns, and soon every dwelling within them was reduced to cinders.

When the fight was over, young Brown returned to Nick-a-jack, and inquired if any prisoners had been



taken. He was directed to a cabin where some twenty were confined, and, entering it, found there, crouching in a corner, his former mistress, the old Frenchwoman. All the captives recognized him, and were terror-stricken, remembering his murdered kindred. The old woman was the only one to speak. She pleaded for their lives, reminding Joseph that she had saved him when he was about to be murdered by Cutleotoy. "We are white people," he said to her; "we do not kill women and children." "Oh, co-tan-co-ney!" ("Oh, that is good news to the wretched!"), cried the old woman.

In concluding his report of the expedition to the Governor, Major Ore says: "At Nick-a-jack were found two fresh scalps which had been lately taken at Cumberland; a quantity of powder and lead, lately arrived there from the Spanish Government; and a commission for the Breath, the head-man of the town, who was among the killed." The prisoners taken informed him that a party of Creeks and Cherokees had just gone forward to raid upon the Cumberland; and he adds, "They also informed me that two nights before the destruction of Running Water, a scalp-dance was held in it, over the scalps lately taken from Cumberland, at which were present John Watts, the Bloody Fellow, and other chiefs of the Lower Towns, and it was determined to continue the war in conjunction with the Creeks with more activity than heretofore, and to erect block-houses at each of the lower towns for their defense, as advised by the Spanish Government."

As Nick-a-jack was taken completely by surprise, on it fell the heaviest slaughter. To it belonged the warriors who had murdered the Brown family, and, in leading the troops to its destruction, young Brown felt that he was acting as "God's avenger." This feeling continued with him to the very last, and when he wrote out his narrative, at the great age of eighty-six, he said, "The judgment of Heaven fell upon the Indians."

The towns of Nick-a-jack and Running Water were now the principal crossing-places of the Creeks in their raids upon the Cumberland. All the Indian trails branched from those places, and not from the towns higher up the river; and hence, by the most liberal construction of his orders, Major Ore was not at liberty to attack the three other towns, though they were no doubt equally as guilty. Therefore, when the work of destruction was completed, he crossed the Tennessee with his prisoners, and marched back to Nashville, with only three of his command so much as wounded.

On the return of the troops from the expedition, Major Ore made a full report to the Governor; but before that date, and as soon as he received Robertson's letter announcing his resolution, Blount wrote to him: "You can't conceive my surprise and mortification on being taught to believe that you have so far countenanced the lawless attempt of Whitley as to give conditional sanction to troops going with him. . . . I hope the conditional order of muster was *not in writing*. I know not the price I would take to report such an order to the

War Department. Your letter of 30th ult. will be destroyed, that it may never rise in judgment. Don't suppose this too severe; it proceeds from my personal esteem, and the high value I set upon your public character. No good consequences can arise from such unauthorized expeditions." In a subsequent letter, dated the 2d of October, he says: "None of your letters heretofore written will appear, so that you have it in your power to take up the subject at large, and state your reasons."

Put thus upon the defensive, Robertson replied promptly to this letter as follows:

"NASHVILLE, *October 8, 1794.*

"SIR: I have to acknowledge the receipt of your Excellency's letter of the 2d instant. Inclosed you have a copy of my order to Major Ore, of the 6th of September; my reasons for giving it were that I had received two expresses from the Chickasaws—one by Thomas Brown, a man of as much veracity as any in the nation, the other by a common runner—giving information that a large body of Creeks, with the Cherokees of the Lower Towns, were embodying with a determination of invading the District of Miro; and not doubting my information, I conceived, if Major Ore did not meet this invading army of Creeks and Cherokees, as I expected, that it could not be considered otherwise than defensive to strike the first blow on the Lower Towns, and thus check them in the advance. Nor could I suppose that the pur-

suing of parties of Indians who had recently committed murders and thefts, to the towns from whence they came, and there striking them, could be considered as an offensive measure unauthorized by the usage of nations in such cases. It can not be necessary to add as a justification the long-repeated, and I might say, almost daily sufferings of the people of the District of Miro, by the hands of the Creeks and Cherokees of the Lower Towns."

He then enumerates various murders which had been committed in widely-separated places, during the absence of the troops, to prove that even then three distinct hostile parties were marauding through the district, and he closed by saying: "If I have erred, I shall ever regret it. To be a good citizen, obedient to the law, is my greatest pride; and to execute the duties of the commission with which the President has been pleased to honor me, in such a manner as to meet his approbation, and that of my superiors in rank, has ever been my most fervent wish. . . . Inclosed is a copy of a letter to John Watts; and from my experience in Indian affairs, I have my hopes that, from the scourging Major Ore has given the lower Cherokees, we shall receive less injury from them than heretofore."

John Watts was the most redoubtable of the Cherokee warriors, and the acknowledged head-chief of the Lower Towns. In the letter to him, a copy of which he inclosed to the Governor, Robertson announced very distinctly that another expedition would be speedily sent to destroy the remaining towns, if Watts did not at once re-

store all the whites who were held captive in the nation, and also take immediate and effectual measures to restrain his warriors from further ravages on the Cumberland.

This letter was a direct notice to the Governor that Robertson would no longer be hampered by instructions to confine himself to defensive operations. The response which Robertson received from Blount was a letter informing him that the Secretary of War directed him to say that "all ideas of offensive operations must be laid aside," and he added, "It will be your duty, sir, to use your authority, in you vested, to prevent the repetition of such acts." Robertson's reply to this was the following letter of resignation, dated

"KNOXVILLE, *October 23, 1794.*

"SIR: Finding it incompatible with my private avocations any longer to perform the duties of brigadier-general of the militia of Miro District in the Territory of the United States south of the river Ohio, with which appointment I have been honored by the President of the United States, I beg leave to resign that commission, at the same time assuring you that it is not through any disgust with the public service, or officers of Government, that I am induced to take this step."

In reference to Robertson's resignation the historian Haywood remarks: "What are the feelings excited by this scene, in which we see an old and tried patriot, who never once failed to fly to the succor of his country in



distress, chided and reproved for an act which actually put an end to Indian incursions, and wrested from their hands the tomahawk and scalping-knife? We shall be obliged to say, if an error was committed, it was on the side of virtue and patriotism. . . . Shall one be the savior of his country, and for that be chagrined into retirement? The regrets of that country will follow his exit, and the glow of affection shall rise at the tale. Whoever admires the man that loves his country more than himself, at the same time that he acknowledges the correctness of that policy of government which is inflexible for disobedience of orders will say, with the sincerity of truth, that, in this instance, I wish it were otherwise."

The raid upon the Chickamauga towns did, in fact, "put an end to Indian incursions" against the Cumberland settlements. This result probably followed not so much on account of the actual damage which had been inflicted upon the Indians, as because they were shown that their secret haunts had become known to the whites, and they had again adopted an offensive policy that would soon lead to their extermination. And now it was the Indians who begged for a cessation of hostilities. John Watts knew that Robertson's intimation of another visit to the Lower Towns was no idle threat, and he no sooner received his letter by the hands of a liberated prisoner, than he applied to Scolacutta (Hanging-Maw), now the head king of the Cherokees, to make peace for him with the pale-faces. Scolacutta was known to have done all he could to restrain the Chickamaugas, and con-



sequently the Governor now cheerfully granted him the conference he requested. It took place early in November on the Tellico. John Watts was present, and he opened the talk by strong expressions of penitence for his misconduct, admitting that the Running Water and Nick-a-jack towns deserved the treatment they had received. "I know," he said, "General Robertson to be a good man, and that he always does what is right."

Scolacutta's speech on the occasion was so brief that it may be given in full. "I am," he said, "the head-man of my nation, as Governor Blount is of the white people. It was not the fault of either of us that those towns were destroyed. Their own conduct brought destruction on them. The trail of murderers and thieves was followed to those towns. Nevertheless, I can not neglect the request they have made to me to make peace for them."

Thus the savages, who were the sufferers by it, approved of the conduct of Robertson : it was subsequently to receive the decided indorsement of Congress. In April, 1798, W. C. C. Claiborne presented to that body the petition of Stephen Cantrill and others, for compensation for services on the Nick-a-jack expedition. The petition was referred to the then Secretary of War, who reported the facts as exhibited by the letters of Governor Blount, and the officers who originated and conducted the expedition, and added these remarks : "The destruction of the lower Cherokee towns *stands upon its own footing*. That it was not authorized by the President, or this department, is certain ; and the services for which

compensation is asked were performed on an expedition *offensive, unauthorized*, and in direct violation of orders to Governor Blount, by whom also they were *not sanctioned*."

However, with a report so decidedly adverse to the petition, it was nevertheless granted. In a speech in behalf of the petitioners, Mr. Claiborne said: "The expedition was authorized by General Robertson, and it remains now for us to decide whether soldiers shall or shall not be entitled to pay until they have previously assured themselves of the legitimate authority of their commanding officer. At the time when this expedition was set on foot, a *war* raged between the United States and the Cherokee nation of Indians, the horrors of which bore hard upon the District of Miro. *The very existence of the settlement was threatened*. Scarcely a day passed without some of the inhabitants being murdered. Information was received that the Indians were embodied, in order to carry the war into the settlements.

"What was the general to do? Stand still? Make no effort to avert the danger? He was not the man to do that; they were not the people to endure forever. Already had they suffered and had patience beyond all former example. The safety of the people required him to act, and he struck the first blow, which was a defensive one—a defensive measure fully authorized by the usages of all nations. Citizens obeyed the command of their officer—they had served under him before; they did not falter now."

The opinion of Congress was that a just and wise construction of his orders justified the measures pursued by Robertson ; and a resolution being offered that his soldiers were entitled to pay, it was agreed to without opposition, and a bill to that effect was at once reported and passed unanimously.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### PIOMINGO.

WHILE Robertson was making preparations for the expedition against the Chickamaugas, there suddenly appeared before his station one morning a body of a hundred and twenty savages, armed and painted for the war-path. They rode boldly up to the gateway, and, to his great joy, Robertson discovered at their head his devoted friend Piomingo. A desperate attempt had been made upon the life of the Chickasaw king by a party of Creeks, and this had given rise to the report of his death which had reached Robertson. Piomingo had sent several messengers to apprise his white brother of his safety, but none of them had got through, because the Creeks and Chickamaugas waylaid every pathway into the white settlements. He had very narrowly escaped assassination, but the attempt to murder him had brought the disaffected among his chieftains to their reason, and united them against his enemies ; even Ugulayacabe now declared that he had turned his back upon the Spaniards forever. The Creeks and Shawnees were still hostile

to the Chickasaws, but fearing no immediate danger from them, Piomingo had concluded to give his young braves some experience of war, by leading them to the help of General Wayne in his campaign against the Northern Indians. After being hospitably entertained by Robertson, and furnished with an abundance of ammunition, the troop set out on its long journey into the Northern forests. They did good service in the battle of Fallen Timbers, on the 14th of August, 1794; and then, hearing that their country was again threatened by the Creeks, they made all haste back to the Chickasaw nation. From a runner dispatched to him by Piomingo, Robertson received his first accounts of that battle, which broke the power of the Northern Indians.

The Cherokees had now been subdued, but the Creeks continued their ravages among the outlying settlements. Only eleven days after the return of the Chickamauga expedition, a party of fifty surprised, in his absence, the station of Colonel Titsworth on the Red River, and in broad day slaughtered seven of his family, and took three of his young children and a well-grown daughter prisoners. Pursuit being at once made by the militia of the neighborhood, the Indians killed and scalped the young children, but got safely away with the young woman and a negro servant. Within a very few days the father, half frantic with his grief, came to Robertson's station, asking to be given a pass into the Creek country. Only this one daughter had been left of all his family, and he had resolved to risk his own life in an attempt to

ransom her from the Indians. Strange as it may seem, he penetrated in entire safety into the very heart of the Creek country, and recovered his daughter without the payment of the smallest ransom. The Creeks regarded him as insane, and persons of disordered mind they believe to be under divine protection ; whoever does them an injury incurs the wrath of the Great Spirit.

Only six days after the calamity to Colonel Titsworth's family, a similar body of Creeks attacked at midday the station of Valentine Sevier, near Clarks-ville. To aid in the defense of the station since the death of his sons, he had admitted to one of its cabins a Mr. Snyder and family, the others being occupied by a number of young men, who were employed on his plantation. The terrible scene that occurred there was graphically told by Colonel Sevier, in the following letter to his brother, John Sevier :

"CLARKSVILLE, *December 18, 1794.*

"DEAR BROTHER : The news from this place is desperate with me. On Tuesday, 11th of November last, about twelve o'clock, my station was attacked by about forty Indians. On so sudden a surprise, they were in almost every house before they were discovered. All the men belonging to the station were out, only Mr. Snyder and myself. Mr. Snyder, Betsey his wife, his son John, and my son Joseph, were killed in Snyder's house. I saved Snyder, so the Indians did not get his scalp, but they shot and tomahawked him in a barbarous manner.



They also killed Ann King and her son James, and scalped my daughter Rebecca. I hope she will still recover. The Indians have killed whole families about here this fall. You may hear the cries of some persons for their friends daily.

“The engagement commenced by the Indians at my house, continued about an hour, as the neighbors say. Such a scene no man ever witnessed before. Nothing but screams, and roaring of guns, and, for some time, no man to assist me. The Indians have robbed all the goods out of every house, and have destroyed all my stock. You will write our ancient father this horrid news; also my son Johnny. My health is much impaired. The remains of my family are in good health. I am so distressed in my mind that I can hardly write.

“Your affectionate brother, till death,

“VALENTINE SEVIER.”

A few days later the Creeks killed Colonel John Montgomery, who had been out on the Chickamauga expedition, and for several years had done effective service in the protection of the settlements. Other murders quickly followed which brought the death-roll up to twenty-four during the last twenty days of this month of November. When the bloody tidings reached Robertson, he set out at once for a conference with the Governor at Knoxville. After some delay his resignation had been accepted by the War Department, but not to take effect until the following August, and, before he was free from

his oath of office, he hesitated to act against the Indians on his own responsibility. He now proposed to the Governor to urge upon the Government the making of common cause with the Choctaws and Chickasaws for the extermination of the pestiferous Creek nation.

Governor Blount, who had all along held Robertson back, and dreamed of peace when there was no peace, now cordially adopted his suggestions. He wrote at once to the Secretary of War, recommending a thorough arming of the Choctaws and Chickasaws, and a formidable expedition under General Sevier into the Creek country. After suggesting the plan and time of the invasion, he went on to say that from the day of the Declaration of Independence to the date of his letter, the Creeks had not ceased to plunder and kill the citizens of the United States, without cause or provocation, and regardless of the Treaty of New York, and of all other pledges; and, until they were made to sensibly feel the horrors of war at their own wigwams, they would not desist from their murderous raids against the white settlements. If these raids continued, the advanced settlements would be annihilated, unless the Government came promptly to their defense; and the only effectual defense was an invasion of the Creek country.

But the situation of the settlers was no better appreciated by Secretary Pickering than it had been by Secretary Knox. He refused to listen to any suggestion for offensive operations, and expressed the opinion that the white settlers on the frontier were the aggressors, and

the Indians stood more in need of protection from them than they from the Indians ! He emphasized this opinion by refusing to pay General Sevier's brigade for the campaign of 1793, and the officers and men who had served under Major Ore on the Chickamauga expedition. After enumerating many improprieties in the conduct of the Governor, and of General Robertson, and forbidding any assistance to be given to the Chickasaws, his letter to the Governor closed as follows : " Upon the whole, sir, I can not refrain from saying that the complexion of some of the transactions in the Southwestern Territories appears unfavorable to the public interest. It is plain that the United States are determined, if possible, to avoid a direct or indirect war with the Creeks."

A copy of this letter was sent to Robertson, and was read by him to the leading men upon the Cumberland. Their comment upon it was : " We have asked for bread, and they have given us a serpent. We have prayed for a blessing, and have received cursing. Our miserable condition is now made more hopeless. We have insult added to innumerable injuries."

In a conference which was held in December with the Cherokees for an exchange and release of prisoners, their king, Scolacutta, said to the Governor that his nation, in consequence of its having made peace with Robertson, was much exposed to the enmity of the Creeks ; and he besought him, as the Cherokees and Chickasaws were now good friends, to " tell them to join with us to assist the white people against the Creeks. Is it true,"

he asked, "that this country" (the Cumberland) "is not under the protection of the United States? Or is it that the President is not informed of the many murders and thefts committed there by the Creeks?" Thus it will be seen that the Creeks had managed to secure the ill-will of all the neighboring Indians, and that it was then in the power of Robertson to bring all the South-western tribes into a coalition against that troublesome nation.

Shortly prior to this time the Spaniards had erected a fort at Chickasaw Bluff (Memphis), and garrisoned it with three hundred men. It was an arrogant encroachment upon United States territory, and done for the evident purpose of overawing the Chickasaws. Against it Piomingo had energetically protested, and Gayoso had replied with pleasant phrases, but he had not removed the fort or the garrison. Soon after this, Colonel Titsworth returned from the Creek nation, with his rescued daughter, and he reported to Robertson that the Creeks were embodying five thousand warriors for a descent, in the early spring, upon the Chickasaw nation. Of this no doubt Piomingo was aware, but on receipt of the intelligence, Robertson mounted his horse, and, with a small escort, rode off through the woods to see, with his own eyes, what preparations were being made by the Chickasaw king for the defense of his nation. He found that he had built no less than thirty-five forts in various parts of his country, mounted the Nashville swivel on the walls of Log Town, his capital, and drilled his war-

### 300 ADVANCE-GUARD OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION.

riors to garrison duty, and to fighting behind intrenchments. He had been an attentive observer of the ways of the white people.

During this visit Piomingo showed to Robertson a letter he had but recently received from Gayoso, the commandant at Natchez, wherein the wily Spaniard accused the Americans of trespassing upon the Indian lands, and of a design to possess the whole country. "What" he said, "will become of the red-men, should they be deprived of their hunting-grounds? The true policy for all the tribes is to unite, and make common cause against their enemies" (the Americans). "Make peace," he said "with the Creeks. Be you, the Chickasaws and Choctaws, united; and should you be attacked, your faithful friends and allies, the Spaniards, will support you, and give you as many arms, and as much ammunition, as you may want."

Piomingo knew, when he read this, that the Spaniards had suborned one of his leading warriors to overthrow and, perhaps, to murder him; and that, at that very moment, they were inciting and arming the Creeks for a formidable attack upon his nation. "The Spaniards wear two faces," he had often said to Robertson. "Piomingo is not a fool. He knows his friends. Not any of his own race have stood by him like his white brother."

During the winter that followed, the Cumberland colony was altogether free from savage incursions. The Creeks were too busy preparing to crush the Chicka-



saws, to give any attention to the white settlers; and the Chickamaugas, their secret retreats being now known, did not venture to invite the second visit threatened by Robertson. The lawless activity of their young warriors being thus restrained, there was danger that it would find vent in a war upon the Chickasaws. This thought gave Robertson much concern. He feared that a strong combination might be formed against Piomingo. He knew that emissaries from the Creeks had been among the lower Cherokees, and soon he heard that Spain had seduced fifteen hundred Choctaw warriors into an alliance with the Creeks against their traditional friends, the Chickasaws.

Without Piomingo's steady friendship of twelve years it is probable that the Cumberland colony could not have survived the many dangers that it had encountered. Of this Robertson was keenly conscious. He had positive orders to give no assistance to the Chickasaws, and, says Haywood, "his honest soul lamented in silence the unapproved restraint." It is a curious fact that both he and Sevier, the two leaders who did the most effective service to Western civilization, and but for whose unwavering patriotism the trans-Alleghany region would have been wrested from the Union, should have been forced by circumstances to act in direct opposition to the orders of the Government. Their acts were subsequently approved, but at the time they were no better than rebellion, and had no other justification than necessity.



Robertson now resolved, whatever might be the consequences, to stand by Piomingo. To the prisoners whom he returned to the Chickamaugas, he said : "Tell all Creeks and Cherokees that they must keep peace with the Chickasaws. If they go to war with them, they go to war with me. I am no longer a great chief of the United States, but my young men will follow where I lead, and I shall surely lead them to the destruction of any town that lifts a hatchet against the Chickasaws." He said in effect the same to Governor Blount when, about this time, he asked permission to send to Piomingo such supplies of corn, arms, and ammunition as were needed to fully prepare him for his expected conflict with the Creeks. The Governor had been converted from his long belief in a peace policy, and a recent correspondence of some asperity with Secretary Pickering had put him in a belligerent mood ; but he did not court an open rupture with the War Department. However, instead of a downright refusal, he said to Robertson : "Do as you please ; but act on your own responsibility, not on mine." Without delay Robertson loaded a couple of flat-boats with five hundred stand of arms, and a bountiful supply of corn and ammunition, and dispatched them in charge of Major Coffield, and a guard of thirty-five men, to the Chickasaws. The boats were fired upon by a party of Creeks about twenty-five miles below Clarksville, and Major Coffield and two of the guard were wounded, but they got safely through to Piomingo.

The supplies had not been many days on their way,

when the Chickasaw chief, Colbert, appeared in the settlements, with a small party of warriors. He had come to ask for the same supplies, and for a few of Robertson's young men to fight the enemies of the Chickasaws. He did not fear but that single-handed his braves could whip the Creeks and Chickamaugas, and yet he thought a few—a very few—of the young men of his white brother, would show the Creeks that the whites made common cause with the Chickasaws, and impress upon them the fact that if they did not desist, the great chief of the Cumberland would soon descend upon them as Wayne had descended upon the Shawnees, the Wyandots, and the Delawares. If the United States should object to this, and refuse to pay the young men, they would be paid by the Chickasaws.

There was good sense in the suggestion, and Robertson at once called for volunteers, stating frankly that the men would have to go, not as United States soldiers, but as independent American citizens. Such a number offered themselves as would speedily have bankrupted the Chickasaw nation ; but from the whole Robertson chose only seventy—all, however, experienced Indian fighters, and led by Captain David Smith, and the veteran woodsman, Colonel Casper Mansker. Early in May they arrived in the Chickasaw country, and Mansker set about a thorough examination of the Chickasaw defenses. He strengthened the forts, and drilled the Indians, and then sat down with Piomingo at Big Town to await the coming of the Creeks, who were reported on the march to

the number of over two thousand. Log Town was the larger place, and the capital of the country, and on the fort there was mounted the "little piece," which had been donated to Piomingo by Robertson. This town was under the command of Colbert and Captain Smith, who had with him only thirty of the whites. The other volunteers, and a much larger body of Indians, were at Big Town, under Piomingo himself and Colonel Mansker, and it was expected that it would be the first place attacked, as it was not defended by a swivel, a thing much dreaded by the Indians. The Chickasaws were in exuberant spirits, for with the "little piece" to make a noise, and the white men to show them how to fight, they deemed themselves invincible.

It is probable that the Creeks were not informed of the presence of the swivel, for suddenly, on the morning of the 28th of May, all of two thousand strong, they surrounded the fort at Log Town. A half-hour before, two Chickasaw women had gone from the fort to gather wood in the adjacent forest. They were captured by the Creeks, and inhumanly massacred in full view of the garrison. Exasperated at the sight, Captain Smith proposed a sortie to Colbert, but the wary chief held him back. "It is what they wish," he said, "to draw us from the fort. They will rush in and destroy the women and children." But some of his warriors could not be controlled. Rushing out, they fell furiously upon the Creeks, but were soon forced back, leaving one of their number dead upon the ground. Seeing that the whole

party was in danger of destruction, Colbert allowed Smith to go to their rescue, while he opened upon the besiegers with the swivel, and every gun in the fortress. The "little piece" mowed a wide swath through the Creeks, and by the time it had uttered its voice a second time, struck with panic, they fled beyond the range of its missiles. Their leaders could not rally them to a second charge; and the retreat was continued till they had arrived in their own country. Thus the little swivel did again as effectual service as it had done fourteen years before, when it lifted up its voice at midnight from the walls of the fort at Nashville.

The thorough character of the Creek defeat was not at first realized by Piomingo. He could not credit the fact that two thousand warriors had run away from a single four-pounder. He looked for an early assault from the enemy in some other part of the Chickasaw country, but no attack being made, at the end of sixty days he let the volunteers return to Robertson.

As Robertson had expected, his giving of aid to the Chickasaws was lamented by the War Department; but it was, in the following year, approved by Congress. The first appearance of Andrew Jackson on the floor of the House of Representatives was on the 29th of December, 1796, when he advocated that payment be made to the brigade, which under John Sevier, had made the campaign of Etowah; the second, was a few days later, on his presenting the petition of George Colbert for compensation to the volunteers who had fought for the Chicka-

saws. "The Chickasaw nation," said the chief, "was about to be invaded by the Creeks, when he applied for aid to their brother, James Robertson, who said he had no orders to send them any assistance; that he must first have orders from their father, the President of the United States. However, a detachment of *volunteers*, under command of Colonel Mansker, came to their aid, and were sixty days with the Chickasaws, helping them to drive off their enemies." Both petitions were granted without opposition, and thus did Colbert redeem his promise to pay the volunteers.

The Indian is by nature a braggart, and the young Chickasaw braves partook of this race characteristic. They could not resist the inclination to boast of their astonishing victory. Through all the Southern tribes they sent word that the Creeks were "Nockiny-hobocks"—not men, but the meanest sort of women, who had fled at the mere blowing of a buffalo-horn; and consequently the Creeks became the laughing-stock of all the Indian nations. Directly after the fight at Log Town, Robertson made strenuous efforts to bring the Creeks into peaceful relations with the Chickasaws, but that universal laugh frustrated all his efforts. The young men of the Creeks would listen to no sort of terms till they had shown themselves men, and not women.

After sending several fruitless embassies to the Creeks, Robertson decided upon a personal visit to Piomingo, to induce him to make pacific overtures to his mortified enemies. With the Chickasaw king he found Don Ga-



yoso, the Spanish commandant at Natchez, who, to Robertson's surprise, expressed as strong a desire as he himself felt that the hostile nations should resume peaceful relations. He approved of Robertson's suggestion of a friendly embassy to the Creeks from the Chickasaws. To this Piomingo promptly assented, and, calling in his white secretary, he dictated to him, in their presence, an address to the "head-men, chiefs, and warriors, of the great and brave nation of the Talapouches." The paper was adroitly phrased to heal the wounded pride of the Creeks, and it offered a free exchange of prisoners, and lasting friendship with his brave red brothers the Creeks.

The address being approved by Robertson and the Spanish gentleman, Piomingo dispatched runners throughout the nation to call his chiefs and principal warriors together to a great council at Big Town. They came to the number of several hundreds, and when they were all assembled, and Piomingo had made them a short speech in their own language, his secretary proceeded to translate his address to the Creek nation. It was unanimously approved, and then being signed by Piomingo and his principal warriors—all but he and Colbert signing with a cross—it was certified by the secretary. Then, at the suggestion of Robertson, a few words of approval were added to the paper, and it was signed by himself and Gayoso. This being done, mounted messengers, armed only with a pipe of peace, were, on the 13th of June, 1795, dispatched with the paper into the Creek nation. On the 27th of the ensuing July the messengers



returned with the following answer : " We have smoked your tobacco in token of peace. We desire to bury the war-hatchet forever. Let war cease among the red-men. As a proof of friendship, do you deliver to General Robertson all Creek prisoners, and restrain your young men from rash acts. We will do likewise."

Piomingo promptly sent to Robertson the prisoners he had taken from the Creeks, who went into camp under the tall maples that grew about his station to await the arrival of those who were to be returned to the Chickasaws. They came at last, and then all went to their respective nations. This Robertson regarded as an end of the war between the red-men, and it doubtless would have been, had not that ugly word, " Nockiny-ho-bocks," still rankled in the breasts of the younger braves of the Creek nation. The older warriors desired peace, and, for reasons to be soon explained, it was urgently pressed upon them by their good friends the Spaniards. But the mortified pride of the younger men could not be appeased until they had wiped out the disgrace of their hasty stampede from Log Town. To do this they were resolved ; but they kept their own counsel, and so secretly did they go about their preparations that it was weeks before they were suspected by their chieftains, much less by Piomingo.

Convinced by the return of the prisoners that the Creeks were acting in good faith, the Chickasaw king disbanded his warriors, and allowed every one to return, with his wife and children, to his cabin or his wigwam.

He and about three hundred of his braves dwelt at Big Town; and he was there with no thought of danger, when one morning about the middle of September, the place was suddenly surrounded by about a thousand yelling Talapouches. The assault was so unexpected, that for a few moments all was confusion, during which six men, and one woman of the Chickasaws, were slaughtered. But Piomingo was not merely a brave man, he was a soldier and a general. Quickly he rallied his three hundred warriors, and rushed with such fury upon the Creeks, that, overborne by the fierce attack, they soon fled, leaving twenty-six of their warriors dead upon the ground, and bearing away a much larger number of wounded.

In a report of this fight which Piomingo sent to Robertson, he said: "About a thousand Creeks came to destroy the Chickasaw nation. They had some white people with them; they came with drums, and had preparations to make a siege and capture of Log Town, and of other places. A great many came on horseback. The Chickasaws of Big Town fell on them, put them to rout, pursued them about five miles, took all their baggage and clothing—*except their flaps*—the only clothing they had on when they began the attack."

In reply to this cheerful dispatch, Robertson wrote to Piomingo that after inflicting upon them such another crushing defeat, he could well afford to again offer peace to the Talapouches. Piomingo did so, and with many expressions of regret for the bad conduct of their young

men, his peace-pipe was accepted by the head-men of the Creek nation. Peace came also to the long-distressed settlers along the Cumberland. No longer was wailing heard in all the land, wives lamenting for husbands, and mothers for children, struck down by the merciless tomahawk of a savage enemy. After fifteen years of a darkness more terrible than, either before or since, has afflicted any portion of the American people, day at last dawned upon these heroic pioneers, awaking a joy such as can be felt only by those who have experienced such a long night of horrors. Of the causes which led to this happy result I shall speak in the concluding chapter.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### CONCLUSION.

THE sudden change of front on the part of the Spaniards, which is indicated by the action of Don Gayoso, calls for explanation. In May, 1793, M. Genet had appeared at Philadelphia, as minister from the French Republic, which was then at war with Spain. He was received with enthusiasm by the American people generally, a large majority of whom felt grateful to France for her aid in the Revolution, and sympathized strongly in her effort to establish free institutions in Europe. Taking advantage of this almost universal feeling, Genet proceeded, in defiance of the remonstrances of Washington and his Cabinet, to recruit men, and fit out privateers in American ports for active war upon the enemies of France. He knew that Louisiana was more French than Spanish, and that a large portion of its population would gladly come under the domination of France ; and he was also well acquainted with the universal discontent existing at the West in consequence of the occlusion of the Mississippi. In these circumstances he deemed that it

would be an easy task to recruit in Kentucky and Tennessee a force which should descend the Mississippi, and, with the aid of the disaffected French population, wrest Louisiana from Spain, and erect it into an independent republic in alliance with and under the protection of France. To this end he dispatched active and intelligent agents to the West to inflame the people, and recruit volunteers for an armed expedition down the Mississippi. Chief among these agents was Auguste de la Chaise, a gentleman of French extraction, but a native of Louisiana, and a member of one of its most influential families. He was a man of exquisite address, ready eloquence, rare ability, and peculiarly fitted to act upon the fiery and adventurous spirits who then composed a large portion of the border population. He entered upon his work with enthusiastic zeal, organizing at once Jacobin clubs in the larger towns, and enlisting in the enterprise George Rogers Clark, who had not then lost all his early popularity.

Receiving a commission as major-general from the French minister, Clark issued a call for volunteers, and in a very brief time more than two thousand men flocked to his standard. The Jacobin clubs also bore early fruit in a convention of citizens which met at Lexington, Kentucky, on the 24th of May, 1794. This convention was presided over by so genuine a friend of the Union as Judge George Muter, but it passed resolutions breathing nothing but war, and addressed a remonstrance "to the President and Congress of the United States," which, to

say the least, was of a most decided and energetic character. As this remonstrance is beyond question a correct index to the popular feeling at this period, a portion of it is here given.

After enumerating the wrongs inflicted upon the West by Great Britain, in the retention of the Northwestern posts, and the arming and encouraging of the Northern Indians in their depredations upon the frontier, the paper goes on to say : "That these injuries and insults call loudly for redress, and that we will, to the utmost of our abilities, and in any mode that can be devised, support the General Government in the firmest and most effectual measures to obtain full satisfaction for all our wrongs.

"That your remonstrants, and the other inhabitants of the United States west of the Alleghany and Appalachian Mountains, are entitled by Nature and stipulation to the free and undisturbed navigation of the river Mississippi ; and that, from the year 1783 to this day, they have been uniformly prevented by the Spanish king from exercising that right. Your remonstrants have observed with concern that the General Government, whose duty it was to have preserved that right, have used no effectual measures for its attainment ; that even their tardy and ineffectual negotiations have been veiled with the most mysterious secrecy ; that that secrecy is a violation of the political rights of the citizen, as it declares that the people are unfit to be intrusted with important facts relative to their rights, and that their



servants may retain from them the knowledge of these facts.

“Eight years are surely sufficient for the discussion of the most doubtful and disputable claims. The right to the navigation of the Mississippi admits of neither doubt nor dispute. Your remonstrants represent, therefore, that the negotiations on that subject have been unnecessarily lengthy, and they expect that it be demanded categorically of the Spanish king whether he will acknowledge the right of the citizens of the United States to the free and uninterrupted navigation of the river Mississippi, and cause all obstructions, interruptions, and hindrances to the exercise of that right in future to be withdrawn and avoided; that immediate answer thereto be required, and that such answer be the final period of all negotiations on that subject.

“Your remonstrants further represent that the encroachments of the Spaniards upon the territory of the United States” (at Chickasaw Bluffs and elsewhere) “is a striking and melancholy proof of the situation to which our country will be reduced, if a tame policy should still continue to direct its councils.

“Your remonstrants join their voices to those of their fellow-citizens in the Atlantic States, calling for satisfaction for the injuries and insults offered to America, and they expect that such satisfaction shall extend to every injury and insult done or offered to any part of America by Great Britain and Spain; and as the detention of the posts, and the interruption of the navigation of the Mis-

issippi, are injuries and insults of the greatest atrocity and of the longest duration, they require the most particular attention to these subjects.

“Your remonstrants declare that it is the duty of the General Government to protect the frontiers, and that the total want of protection which is now experienced by every part of the Western frontier is a grievance of the greatest magnitude, and demands immediate redress.”\*

There could be no mistaking the spirit which actuated this address. The West had, in fact, reached the last limit of peaceable endurance. It was tired of the inactivity of the General Government, and worn out with the smooth duplicity and secret animosity of the Spanish officials. Everywhere the people were as dry tinder ready for ignition, and it needed only the spark now thrown among them by De la Chaise to produce a general conflagration. This is shown by the crowds that rapidly flocked to Clark's headquarters, and the armed bands that everywhere gathered, even as far south as the southern frontier of Georgia. A large majority of the Creek warriors were also burnishing up their Spanish rifles to take part in the extermination of their old friends the Spaniards. It might have been accounted poetic justice had they thus turned his own weapons against the perfidious Spanish Governor.

Carondelet was thoroughly alarmed. From paid spies like Wilkinson and Sebastian he had early intelligence of

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\* “Knoxville Gazette” of June 19, 1794

the threatening attitude of the Western people, and greatly he feared that the spring flood would bring an irresistible force down the Mississippi, to sweep him and his six thousand badly trained and disaffected militia into the Gulf of Mexico. The time was short and the danger imminent, but Carondelet did not sleep at his post. With all his remarkable energy he set to work to strengthen the fortifications of New Orleans, and drill his forces for the expected conflict. Then he attempted the pacification of his Indian allies, and instructed Gayoso to heal, at any cost, the breach between the Creeks and the Chickasaws. They should not be allowed to scalp one another, when every barbarian of them all might soon be needed to protect the sacred dominions of "His Catholic Majesty" against the encroaching Americans. In this, as we have seen, Gayoso succeeded, through the influence of Robertson and the magnanimity of Piomingo.

But, not content with preparations for defense, Carondelet now sought to disarm the Western men by that favorite Spanish weapon—diplomacy. De la Chaise had succeeded in setting the Western prairies on fire, but he would build a counter-fire, which should burn out the Frenchmen, and leave the Spanish domicile unscorched. All at once he laid aside the haughty tone in which he had chided Robertson for sending a toy cannon to Piomingo, and became wonderfully friendly and fraternal. He opened the gates of the Mississippi, and invited the planters to enter New Orleans, and accept specie for their

bacon and tobacco ; and he renewed Wilkinson's magnificent scheme of a Western republic in alliance with Spain.

Money is a powerful persuader, and Carondelet knew that some of the Kentuckians were open to that kind of persuasion. But Miro had erred in dealing out his gold in niggardly pensions ; Carondelet would offer enough to buy up every public man in Tennessee and Kentucky. One hundred thousand dollars down, and no questions asked, were the terms which he offered through a special messenger—one Thomas Power—whom he now dispatched to Gayoso. Such further sums of money, and such arms and ammunition, as might be needed in case of hostilities with the older States, were also to be forthcoming.

Wilkinson was absent at Cincinnati, but Power put himself in communication with the other traitors, who, in 1788, would have sold the West for a mess of Spanish pottage. They were afraid to meet the Spanish envoy at New Madrid, but deputed Judge Sebastian to do so. Gayoso did not feel at liberty to accede to all of Sebastian's demands, and invited him to a personal conference with Carondelet at New Orleans. He went ; but, while he was there, other events occurred which rendered nugatory this second attempt to swing the West into the arms of Spain.

The call of George Rogers Clark for troops had no sooner reached the ears of the Spanish minister, than he remonstrated against it to the State Department, and

thereupon Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State, wrote to Governor Shelby, urging the exercise of his authority to prevent the proposed hostile invasion of a friendly power. To this request Shelby replied as follows: "There are great doubts, even if they" (the agents of Genet) "do attempt to carry their plan into execution (provided they manage their business with prudence), whether there is any legal authority to restrain or punish them, at least before they have actually accomplished it; for, if it is lawful for one citizen of this State to leave it, it is equally so for any number of them to do so. It is also lawful for them to carry with them any quantity of provisions, arms, and ammunition; and if the act is lawful in itself, there is nothing in the particular intention with which it is done that can possibly make it unlawful. But I know of no law which inflicts a punishment on intention only, or a criterion by which to decide what would be sufficient evidence of that intention if it was a legal object of censure. I shall, upon all occasions, be averse to the exercise of any power with which I do not consider myself as being clearly and explicitly invested; much less would I assume a power to exercise it against men whom I consider as friends and brethren, in favor of a man whom I view as an enemy and a tyrant." He added, however, that whatever his opinions might be as a man, he should, as a citizen of the Union, and the Governor of Kentucky, hold himself at all times bound to obey the reasonable commands of the President of the United States.

Shelby was too sensible a man to believe in his own



logic. His arguments merely show that he favored the movement to drive the Spaniards from Louisiana, and in this he shared the sentiments of the best men in Kentucky. They regarded the expedition as an easy means of ridding the West of a pestiferous neighbor, without embroiling the country in a war with Spain. At a subsequent period Shelby stated that his object in writing this letter was to draw from the Government a frank statement of the real state of its negotiations with Spain. It had this result. Washington, soon afterward, dispatched James Innis, a member of the State Department, to Kentucky, with instructions to disclose to the Governor all the steps which were being taken to secure the navigation of the Mississippi. The whole subject was, on November 13, 1794, laid by Shelby before the Legislature of Kentucky, which fully approved of the course he had taken. Then a proclamation was issued by the President, forbidding the sailing of the expedition, and, this being now actively seconded by Shelby, the lawless attempt was abandoned.

However, this hostile demonstration, and the unfriendly attitude of Shelby, had a powerful effect upon the Spanish Cabinet. It aroused them to a sense of the danger. With a hostile feeling so universal at the West, and the Governor of Kentucky so open in avowing his enmity to Spain, it was now clear to them that, if her North American possessions were to be retained, the border population must be conciliated by the opening of the Mississippi. Accordingly, the Spanish Cabinet in-



vited the United States Government to send an envoy to Madrid, with full powers to arrange all questions between the two countries. The result was the treaty of October 27, 1795, which declared the Mississippi forever free to American commerce.

But the Spaniards intended this treaty only as a temporary expedient to ward off a pressing danger. They continued their efforts to alienate the West from the Union; and as late as 1797, Carondelet again sent Thomas Power into Kentucky with even more favorable proposals to the traitors of 1788. The document which the Spanish governor addressed to the Kentucky gentlemen, is a curious illustration of what the Spaniards of that day entitled "diplomacy." One of its paragraphs is worth copying. In it Carondelet says:

"The important and unexpected events that have taken place in Europe since the ratification of the treaty concluded on the 27th of October, 1795, between his Catholic Majesty and the United States of America, having convulsed the general system of politics in that quarter of the globe, and wherever its influence is extended, causing a collision of interests between nations formerly living in the most perfect union and harmony, and directing the political views of some states toward objects the most remote from their former pursuits; but none being so completely unhinged and disjointed as the Cabinet of Spain, it may be confidently asserted, without incurring the reproach of presumption, that his Catholic Majesty *will not carry the above-mentioned treaty into*

*execution ; nevertheless, the thorough knowledge I have of the disposition of the Spanish Government justifies me in saying that, so far from its being his Majesty's wish to exclude the inhabitants of this Western country from the free navigation of the Mississippi, or withhold from them any of the benefits stipulated for them by the treaty, it is positively his intention, as soon as they shall put it in his power to treat with them, by declaring themselves independent of the Federal Government and establishing one of their own, to grant them privileges far more extensive, give them a decided preference over the Atlantic States in his commercial connections with them, and place them in a situation infinitely more advantageous, in every point of view, than that in which they would find themselves were the treaty to be carried into effect."*

This was of the seed which Wilkinson had planted, but it bore no fruit to the advantage of Spain or to the disadvantage of the Union. That it did not was due to Shelby and to the many good men and true who, ten years before, had rallied to his side to preserve the integrity of the country. Favorable circumstances thwarted the intended bad faith of the Spaniards, and the navigation of the Mississippi was never again a subject of serious concern to the border settlements.

During the few months that preceded and that followed the signing of the Spanish treaty, several events occurred which had a more or less direct bearing upon

the peace and prosperity of the little colony along the Cumberland. Among these events were the consolidation of a firm central government by the energy and wisdom of Washington; Wayne's treaty with the Indians, and the surrender of the Northwestern posts by the British, which secured peace with the Northern tribes; and the admission of Tennessee as a State of the Union and the election of John Sevier as its first Governor, which led to the burying of the hatchet by the warlike Southern nations. The election of Sevier was of vital importance to Robertson's colony, for it held harmless his old enemies the Creeks and Cherokees till after the "good old Governor" went finally out of office in 1810. "His name is a terror to the savages"; "worth more to us than any single regiment of men," said Governor Blount and Secretary Smith in their dispatches to the War Department \* while yet Sevier was subject to the orders of superiors. But the moment the Indians knew that Sevier was at the head of a population of a hundred thousand, and free to act upon his own judgment, they understood that any further indulgence in midnight rapine and butchery would be the signal for their own extermination. The Great Eagle of the pale-faces was a faithful friend but an irresistible enemy. They wisely preferred his friendship to his enmity, and the consequence was that white men and red dwelt together in unity, and universal peace reigned along the border.

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\* See "American State Papers," vol. v, pp. 433, 622.

In this reign of peace the Cumberland colony prospered, and prospered to an extent that has had no parallel in this country—not even in Kentucky. In both war and peace its career was to be the most unique in American history. During fifteen years of the bloodiest conflict its heroic pioneers withstood and finally conquered twenty times their number of savage enemies, and then they turned their giant energies to the subjugation of the wilderness. Out of the trackless forest they hewed thriving towns, beautiful villages, and populous cities, which in ten years held 25,000 people, in fifty years 490,424, and to-day contain more than one half the population of the great State of Tennessee. And the initial impulse which produced all these marvelous results proceeded from that one man—James Robertson.

After resigning from the United States Army, Robertson never held any official position except that of agent for the Choctaws and Chickasaws. This office he retained because of his fatherly feeling for those Indians who had stood by him through all the darkest days of the Cumberland colony. All other office he persistently refused. In 1810, when Sevier, after serving twelve years as Governor, declined any further elections, the position was offered to Robertson, but he simply replied, "The trade of political governing does not suit my genius as well as retirement." He was indifferent to official honors, and had a feeling not unlike contempt for the men who sought political station on account of its emoluments. "If any one out here," he once said,

“desires office for the sake of pay, he ought to die of starvation.”

But, though during the remaining nineteen years of his life merely a private citizen, Robertson was no less the patriarch of the rapidly growing settlements. On all important occasions his counsel was sought, and Sevier, throughout his long service as Governor, constantly consulted him on the affairs of the Commonwealth. At the beginning of their career these two men had been as hand and brain to one another, and so they continued to be till the end. During forty-two years, alike when struggling desperately for a mere right to exist, and when building together with untried hands a great commonwealth, they stood shoulder to shoulder, and never in all that time did so much as a momentary cloud shadow their relations. It is hard to believe that a friendship so devoted and long-continued could have existed between them had they not been men of unselfish ends, with a single thought for the good of their country.

To the end of his days the relations of Robertson to the Choctaws and Chickasaws were of a peculiar character. The highest and the lowest among these Indians regarded him as their friend and father. Their trust in him was unbounded. After a few years Piomingo was called to be a great chief in the upper hunting-grounds, and was succeeded by his son Chin-nubbe, and at the same time John Pitchlyn, of Oak-tibbe-ha, a renowned warrior, was head king of the Choctaws; but the influ-

ence of neither of these kings was so potent in their tribes as that of Robertson. He never went among them without being received with a degree of barbaric pomp that would have been grotesque but for the universal and heart-felt enthusiasm that attended it. At one time he resigned the agency, but was forced to resume it by the general clamor of the Indians, and soon afterward he visited the Chickasaw country to hold the customary "talks." The chief, George Colbert, addressed him a letter on this occasion, which evinces the esteem with which he was regarded. He said :

"MY OLD FRIEND AND FATHER: I am overjoyed with the word you send that you are to be the guide of our nation, as you have been the life of this nation; and every chief of the Chickasaws, I make no doubt, will feel the same as I do. I hope everything will prove satisfactory in every council. When you go by my house, I will take my horse and ride to the king's house and the agency with you."

In 1806-'07 came an alarm of war in consequence of the depredations of the Spaniards and English on American commerce, and Robertson at once organized a corps of veterans, chiefly Revolutionary soldiers, whom he called "Silver-Grays," and tendered their services to Andrew Jackson, who was then major-general of the Tennessee militia. The war-cloud passed away, and their services not being needed, they were after a while



disbanded. In the order dismissing his troops Jackson made the following reference to this "Silver Gray" corps : "When the insolence or vanity of the Spanish Government shall dare to repeat their insults on our flag, or shall dare to violate the sacred obligations of the good faith of treaties ; or should the disorganizing traitor attempt the dismemberment of our country, or criminal breach of our laws, let me ask what will be the effect of the example given by a tender of service made by such men as compose the *Invincible Grays*, commanded, too, by the father of our infant State, General James Robertson ? "

In 1811 Tecumseh made his great attempt to combine all the Northern and Southern Indians in a war against the United States. He had already seduced the Creeks, and it was feared that the war spirit would spread among the Choctaws and Chickasaws. In these circumstances the Government requested Robertson to make his residence for the time being among those tribes, and endeavor to hold them to their allegiance. He was in his seventieth year, and subject to violent attacks of neuralgia, which had undermined his general health and greatly debilitated his system, but he did not hesitate a moment to leave a luxurious home, and, in the service of his country, to encounter again the hardships of the wilderness. To the friends and neighbors who at his setting out gathered about him to bid him "God-speed" on his journey, he said : "I know I am getting to be an old man. I can not delude myself with the idea that I am

young, or with the hope that in this life my days and being will turn backward, and carry me from age through\* reversed stages down to childhood again. I may not do all the good I design. My heart is warm and full, though my limbs are not so very supple. As some of you have said, I may not live to return and settle down again quietly at home. Older men than I have found the post of duty away from their pleasant firesides, and where duty calls there is home."

He not only held the Choctaws and Chickasaws to their allegiance, but he enlisted large numbers of them in the United States Army, and built the two nations into a solid wall between the Creeks and the hostile Northern Indians. His constant presence among the Indians being indispensable, he sent for his wife to bear him company, asking her to bring at the same time a feather-bed and some bedding. In his letter to her he said: "Should you come, I will give you the very best chance for rest and sleep which the bed will afford, 'provided always' that you allow me to retain a part of the same."

His wife found him much exhausted by overwork, and debilitated by his neuralgic disease and the infirmities natural to his seventy-two years. Early in August, 1814, he began to fail rapidly. He had not strength to mount a horse, and could walk about only with great difficulty. Soon the least noise grew painful to him, sharp pains shot through his head, and his brain seemed burning up with a constant fire; then his breathing became heavy and distressing, and on the morning of Sep-

tember first he sank into a prolonged sleep, from which he awoke only to find himself in that grand company of great and good men who had, like him, given their lives for their country and Christian civilization. He was a true man, a pure patriot, a genuine Christian hero ; and when we come to measure greatness by the New Testament standard of unswerving fidelity to duty and unselfish devotion to the good of our fellow-men, it will be admitted that there have been few greater men in American history than JAMES ROBERTSON.

## APPENDIX A.

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THE statement in the text I had from Dr. J. G. M. Ramsey, who had received it in detail from John Sevier himself, with whom he was on terms of the closest intimacy from early childhood till he was of the age of eighteen, when Sevier died. Dr. Ramsey informed me that Sevier was very fond of young people, and that it was his custom in his old age to gather them about him and tell to them the story of his campaigns by the hour together. It was thus that Ramsey imbibed that fondness for pioneer history which bore fruit in his "Annals of Tennessee."

The first letter which Sevier addressed to Don Gardoqui was dated about June 1, 1788; a second was written by him on July 18th, and two others on September 12th following. Of the first two letters no trace is to be found among the papers of Gardoqui; the last two have been very recently discovered in the Spanish archives, and been copied for John Mason Brown, Esq., of Louisville (great-grandson of John Brown, first United States Senator from Kentucky), who has very courteously furnished them to me for publication in this volume. For the appended translation of these letters I am indebted to the kindness of that accomplished Spanish scholar, Prof. W.

I. Knapp, of Yale University, who prefaces it as follows :

“The so-called Spanish original is almost unintelligible by the ignorance of the copyist, and was at first poorly written. Correcting the text at almost every word, and supplying what is omitted, the translation would be something as follows” :

FRANKLIN, *September 12, 1788.*

SIR : Since my last of July 18th, I have been particularly happy to find, on consulting with the leading subjects (*sugetos* for *súbditos*) of this country, that they are equally disposed and favorable as I am toward the proposals and assurances that you offer.

You may rest assured that the sincere hopes and views cherished by this people, respecting the future [*the word unintelligible*] and concession for trade with you, are very decided, and that we are unanimously resolved on the same.

The people of this country have truly come to understand on what part of the world and on what nation their prospective happiness and security depend, and are quick to see that their interests and prosperity wholly consist in the protection and liberality of your government. We must expect by our position and circumstances that we shall be led in a most efficacious way to look for the continued security and prosperity of your government in America, and, being the first to apply to your protection and liberality on this side of the Apalache Mountains, we are encouraged to cherish the liveliest hope that all the aid may be furnished us by him who can so effectually supply it, and the protection be granted which is asked for in this our appeal.

You are acquainted with our country, the situation and embarrassments in which we live with respect to our

mother-State, which makes use of every stratagem to prevent the advance and prosperity of this country. Notwithstanding we possess some of the most fertile lands on the continent, and every facility for exports, still we are not able to dispose of a single article produced (which might be made almost unlimited) without authority to make use of our rivers leading to the seaboard (*puertos de abajo*).

In view of these difficulties, you can easily infer the great scarcity of specie that exists in this country, of which there is so little among us. Nothing else is wanting to secure our mutual interest but a moderate [supply ?] of this article (the amount of which I leave to your prudent judgment) and of other military auxiliaries which you may consider necessary and expedient [to supply us with]. All that is needed to secure what we desire will not exceed a few thousands of pounds. We are encouraged more to make this [request ?] by the knowledge you possess that we can pay promptly for what you may furnish us in the products of this country at the seaboard. I hope that the payment may be made on the easiest terms possible, and that the guarantees and receipts of my son Diego Sevier (who is secretary) will hold us both—myself as well as the State of Franklin—until they are paid and fully satisfied. I do not doubt that the aid asked for will be considered as a trifle taken from your chests (or *treasury*), especially if the important object is considered for which it is to be used, and since we can reimburse so soon the sum advanced, and for which we shall remain under lasting obligations of gratitude and friendship.

We are determined, as far as possible, that you [*unintelligible*], and when you see the advantages that will certainly accrue from this grant, you will see that our inter-



ests flow along the same channel, and will be lasting and inseparable. We are interested in making the most rapid and effective preparations for defense. If any interruption in our relations [with Spain ?] should occur, we must be ready in time, the reasons for which are necessarily quite obvious. Therefore, no more need be said on the subject, and I beg you will let me know from time to time, whenever an opportunity offers and circumstances require. I leave to your discretion any other more available mode of communication that may present itself, and for the remaining matters I refer you to my son Diego (James), who is a person competent to give all information touching the Western country.

Before I conclude, it may be necessary to state that there will be no more favorable opportunity than the present to put the plan in action, as North Carolina has rejected the Constitution, and a considerable time will elapse before she comes to be a member of the Union, if ever. I must beg you the favor to provide Diego with what may be thought useful for us. If a passport could be secured, it would be of great advantage for this country, because it is probable that some of us may find it expedient to go down to the Spanish seaports, and, if produce is permitted to be sent from this region, it would be a matter of great importance to us.

I have the honor to be, sir, with great esteem and consideration, your most obedient servant,

(Signed)

JOHN SEVIER.

To DON DIEGO DE GARDOQUI, Spanish Minister.

## No. 2.

FRANKLIN, *September 12, 1788.*

SIR : Allow me to inform you that for the past few months the people of this country have been at war with the Cherokee nation of Indians, and have [*unintelligible*] in a great measure [*unintelligible*]. It is probable that this nation (the Cherokees) will apply to the Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, to form an alliance for the purpose of carrying on the war still further, in case they can effect it. I trust that we shall not be considered troublesome and impertinent in requesting in our behalf the intervention of the Minister with reference to those tribes, and that he inform them that the Cherokees have continued the war with all liberty, frequently committing murders and other acts of hostility against citizens of this country, and that if the inhabitants thereof should form new settlements on the Tennessee or near the banks of the river [*what follows is unintelligible because badly copied*]. That his Catholic Majesty disposed (?) to favor them, reconciling (*conciliating*) their minds and maintaining peace with all the tribes of Indians found under the protection and control of Spain.

You can assure those tribes of Indians that the people of this country are firmly resolved to live in peace with them, and never had the thought of passing into their territory or in any way [to disturb them?].

I have the honor to be, sir, your most obedient and humble servant,

(Signed)

JOHN SEVIER.

SR. D. DIEGO DE GARDOQUI, Minister of Spain.

It is probable that the two letters were written in Spanish by Sevier himself, and hence are not models of lin-

gual correctness. The concluding paragraph of the first is quoted by Gayarré as evidence that there was an understanding between Sevier and Gardoqui that the State of Franklin should be swung into the arms of Spain. The letter, as a whole, will bear no such construction. It simply shows that Sevier had concluded a commercial transaction with the Spanish minister—arranged for supplies which he sorely needed—merely on his promise to pay for them at a future time, and to live in friendly relations with the Spaniards. At this period Sevier was a penniless man and an outlaw, and fighting, with only a handful of men, to protect the French Broad settlers against the whole Cherokee nation. He was short of ammunition, and cut off from further supplies by the unfriendly action of North Carolina, which had abandoned the settlers to destruction. He could obtain no supplies except from Spain, and Spain had armed and incited to war the very savages whom he was fighting. Without ammunition, he was at the mercy of the Cherokees, and that he had the address to obtain it from the very nation that was arming and inciting his enemies, is most extraordinary. As a feat in diplomacy it is as remarkable as some of Sevier's astonishing military achievements.

## APPENDIX B.

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NOTES BY HON. RANDALL M. EWING, OF TENNESSEE.

Page 4.—“*The place is beautiful for situation.*” It is a peculiarity of the geological formation of Middle Tennessee that the entire surface seems to be broken into deep, bowl-like alluvial basins, surrounded on all sides by rims of hills, which, as soon as crossed, bring us into other of these bowl-like valleys. In one of these Nashville is situated.

Page 7.—“*The wild-turkeys.*” My grandfather, William Ewing, often told me that, for the first year after the settlers landed at the French Lick, the breast of the wild-turkey was used as bread, and bear-meat for bacon. They made their salt in small quantities by evaporating the water of the spring known as the French Lick. Bear-meat was regularly cured, salted, and smoked, and treated in every respect as bacon.

Page 20.—“*Converting the Bluff into an island.*” Literally so: the place where the fort was located is now often entirely surrounded by water.

Page 25.—“*The scout Castleman.*” There were two brothers—Andrew and Abraham—both famous scouts. Andrew was my great-uncle.

Page 29.—“*He was Miles Standish, without his puritanism.*” If not a Puritan, Robertson was next-door neighbor to one—to wit, a Presbyterian.

Page 43.—“*David Hood was a light-hearted young fellow.*” I have heard my grandfather relate this story more than once: The process devised by these men to cause the skin to grow again upon the scalped head involved an experience which showed that the young man must have had ten lives. To produce a new covering, the skull was bored through in several places, by a gimlet invented for the purpose by a blacksmith, whose name I do not recall.

Page 45.—“*Their companions, whose names have not come down to us.*” The names of some of these scouts I can give, to wit: Abraham and Andrew Castleman, William Ewing, and Wiley, or John Roy; also John and Andrew Buchanan, already mentioned. Roy was a great tobacco-chewer, and the saliva was constantly running from the corners of his mouth. Abe Castleman prophesied that, if Roy were ever shot, it would be in the mouth, and this was singularly fulfilled. Roy and Castleman being out on a scout, Roy was shot through the cheeks while stooping to drink at a spring, which caused his mouth to leak worse than ever. To this I can testify, for he lived to a great age.

Page 63.—“*Court of Common Pleas and Quarter Sessions.*” Of this court my great-grandfather, Andrew Ewing—who Putnam, in his history, says was the right arm and faithful and wise counselor of General Robertson—was the first clerk; and, descending from father to son, the office remained in the family until about 1848.

Page 64.—“*Furnished with benches.*” The first judge, I have heard, sat upon an elevated three-legged stool, without any back. This stool was long pre-

served, and in use by the Clerk of the Circuit Court in his office.

Page 64.—“*Roofs of clapboards.*” These clapboards were not nailed on, but weighted down with heavy beams, or logs laid on the ends of the boards.

Page 68.—“*One dollar per gallon.*” A law was also enacted, fixing the charges of tavern or inn-keepers. If rum floated melted tallow, they could charge only sixpence the fluid pint; if the tallow sank to the bottom, they could exact eightpence.

Page 70.—“*Three axes and two cow-bells.*” My grandfather gave three hundred and twenty acres for a plow-horse, and claimed to the last day of his life that it was the best trade he ever made. The land was six miles south of Nashville. Another of my ancestors bought twenty-four hundred acres with a buffalo-cow and a calf.

Page 71.—“*Those pioneer preachers.*” Among the pioneer divines is one whose name ought to be rescued from the oblivion with which it is threatened. He was the intimate friend of General Jackson, and I have myself heard “Old Hickory” say that he was one of the most eloquent men he had ever heard speak or preach in his life. This man was the Rev. Gideon Blackburn, an ancestor of Governor Blackburn, of Kentucky. He was the first President of the Williamson County Academy.

Page 73.—“*A wagon-road from Clinch River to Nashville.*” One of the gaps in the mountains through which this road passed is still known as the “Cumberland Gap,” and it figured largely as a strategic position in our late civil war. It was the Gibraltar that separated Tennessee and Kentucky from southwest Virginia.

Page 182.—“*The correspondence between Robertson and McGillivray.*” My excellent old friend A. W. Putnam, the historian, thought that these papers, as well as



many other valuable—or rather invaluable—ones, could be found among the papers of Andrew Ewing, my ancestor, in whose handwriting most of General Robertson's state papers were written. I have made repeated efforts to trace and get possession of this rich mine of unwritten history, thinking that I might be able to aid you in your (then prospective) book. I fear that the papers have been irretrievably lost.

Page 188.—“*An orthography equally as original.*” General Jackson sent into Nashville on one occasion for some half-hose for himself, and wrote to the storekeeper to send “half a dozen pairs of ‘sox.’” The merchant laughed at the spelling, and spoke of it so that it came to General Jackson's ears. The next time Jackson met the merchant, he said to him, “If s-o-x doesn't spell socks, what in the devil does it spell?”

Page 221.—“*The first alarm was given by the frightened cattle.*” It was a singular fact, of which I have heard my grandfather often speak, that the horses and cattle of the settlers frequently gave the first warning of the approach of the red-men. He thought they had learned the peculiar odor of the war-paint.

Page 221.—“*Buchanan's Station.*” I saw the old block-house at Buchanan's Station before it was pulled down. It was two stories high, the upper story extending over the sides of the lower about four feet, with port-holes commanding the entrance.

Page 222.—“*Mrs. Buchanan.*” My grandfather was in this fight, and he has frequently told me that Mrs. Sally Buchanan molded bullets on that occasion till after midnight, and at the break of day on the following morning gave birth to a son. That son—Moses Buchanan—died only last year in Franklin, Tennessee.

## INDEX.

---

- ALLEGHANIES, character of the first settlers west of, and importance of the work they did in the Revolution, and subsequently, 1, 2; emigration of three hundred and eighty from Watauga to the present site of Nashville in 1780, 3; they form a military organization and a civil government, 5, 11.
- Appeal of the Territorial Legislature to Congress, 114.
- Aranda, Count of, prime minister of Spain, prophetic declaration of, 78-80.
- Backwoods household, description of a, 202.
- Bledsoe, Anthony, settles at Castalian Springs, 61; elected to the General Assembly, 63; his letter to Sevier, 109; killed by the Indians, 121; Robertson's opinion of him, 122; his widow pursued, and two sons killed, by the Creeks, 247.
- Bledsoe, Isaac, accompanies Robertson to the Cumberland, 6; goes with him to Kentucky for ammunition, 21; his remark on hearing of King's Mountain battle, 22; heroic determination to hold the post, 50; killed by the Creeks, 247.
- Blount, William, appointed Governor by Washington, 190; his description of the Cumberland region, 194; urges measures for the protection of the settlers, 275; adopts Robertson's suggestions, 297; declines responsibility for arming the Chickasaws, 302.
- Boone, Daniel, supplies powder and lead to Robertson, 22.
- Bounty system of North Carolina, 61.
- Brown, Joseph, goes to the rescue of Buchanan's Station, 225; taken captive by the Indians, 231; his experiences among them, 232-238; is liberated by Sevier, 240; removes to near Nashville, 242; enlists under Rains, 243; wounded by the Indians, 255;

### 340 ADVANCE-GUARD OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION.

- explores a route to Nick-a-Jack, 280; guides the Chickamauga expedition, 282; encounters the old Frenchwoman, 284.
- Buchanan's Station, five men killed in erecting, 62; heroic repulse of 700 Indians at, 221-225.
- Burial, first, at Nashville, 16.
- Carondelet, Baron de, succeeds Miro as Governor of Louisiana, 260; his energetic character, 261; his letter to Robertson, 268; attempts to lure Kentucky from the Union, 316.
- Carey, James, reports hostile feeling of Indians, 275.
- Castleman, Abraham, his services and character as a scout, 46-48; at defense of Buchanan's Station, 221; daring raid into the Chickamauga country, 247-249.
- Cherokees, make war upon Robertson, 34; held in check by Sevier, 85; attack Buchanan's Station, 221.
- Chickasaws, war with, 23; their subsequent friendship for Robertson, 28.
- Chickasaw Bluff (Memphis) taken possession of and fortified by the Spaniards, 299.
- Chia-chatt-alla, takes Joseph Brown prisoner, 231; his intrepid death, 223.
- Chickamaugas, their desperate and lawless character, 227, 228; are subdued by Robertson, 279-285.
- Choctaws, in alliance with Piomin-
- go, and friendly to Robertson, 265.
- Clark, George Rogers, abandons Fort Jefferson to aid Robertson, 22; takes prisoner the British Governor of Detroit, 39.
- Clark, Daniel, his account of Wilkinson's visit to New Orleans, 147; his remarks to James Madison, 259.
- Clothing of first settlers, 51.
- Congress, fails to act on petition for aid, 277; approves of Robertson's measures, 292.
- Coldwater, town, 87, 91; expedition, 91-103.
- Colbert, George, Chickasaw chief, asks aid of Robertson, 303; defends Log Town, 304; granted pay by Congress for volunteers, 305.
- Convention, Kentucky, of July 28, 1788, defeats Wilkinson's treason, 174.
- Court, established by Robertson, some of its enactments, 66-69.
- Craig, Captain, reports hostile coalition of Indian tribes, 211.
- Craighcad, Rev. Thomas B., settles at Nashville, 71.
- Creek Indians, number six thousand warriors, 84; form treaty with Spaniards for the extermination of the settlers, 84; constant hostility of, 117; treaty with, 192.
- Cumberland River, frozen in 1780, 4.
- Currency of Robertson, 69.
- Donelson, John, in command of the emigrants who made the perilous

- voyage down the Holston and Tennessee, 3, 8; elected lieutenant-colonel, 5; father-in-law to Andrew Jackson, 7; is killed in the forest.
- Edmeston, John, resolves to invade the Chickamaugas, 220.
- Evans, Major Nathaniel, in command of troops for protection of the Cumberland colony, 110; dispatched by Sevier to warn Shelby of Wilkinson's treason, 173.
- Ewing, Andrew, envoy sent by Robertson to McGillivray, 118; is clerk of the court, 118; his patriotic character, 185 (note).
- Fourth of July celebrated at Nashville, 189.
- Freeland's Station attacked, 26, 27.
- French Lick (Nashville) in 1780, described, 45.
- Fruitless overtures to Spain, 205.
- Gamble, James, a noted fiddler, 203.
- Gayoso, Don de Lamos, Spanish commandant at Natchez, his character and first interview with Wilkinson, 145-147; petition from Cherokees to him, 262; accuses the Americans of trespassing on Indian lands, 300; counsels the Chickasaws to make peace with the Creeks, 307.
- Godoy, Don Manuel, Spanish prime minister, his neglect of Washington's overtures, 206-208; his blundering policy, 208.
- Hamilton, Henry, British Governor of Detroit, his plan to exterminate the Western settlers, 9, 10; made prisoner, and lodged in jail, 10.
- Hall, William, defends Castalian Springs at death of Anthony Bledsoe, 121; heroic conduct at Greenfield Station, 248-250.
- Hay, Joseph, the first settler killed at Nashville, 15.
- Hayes, Colonel Robert, in command of the boat expedition against the Chickamaugas, 93.
- Hayes, "Grandma," her heroic defense of her dwelling, 253.
- Haywood the historian's opinion of Robertson, 288, 301.
- Hood, David, his remarkable experience, 45.
- Jackson, Andrew, settles at Nashville, 188; first fight with Indians, 87; first appearance on the floor of Congress, 305.
- Jefferson, Thomas, his manly attitude toward Spain, 209.
- Kilpatrick, Colonel, killed and beheaded by the Creeks, 217.
- Lucas, Major Robert, killed at Freeland's Station, 27.
- Mason boys, heroic exploit of, 42.
- Mansker, Colonel Casper, erects a station, 15; an efficient scout, 48; goes to the aid of Piomingo, 303.
- Marshall, Thomas, aids Shelby to crush Wilkinson's treason, 176;

### 342 ADVANCE-GUARD OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION.

- reports affairs to Washington, 200; advises Wilkinson's appointment in the army, 200.
- McGillivray, Alexander, chief of the Creeks, an account of him, 80-85; his treaty with the United States, 191; his death, 260.
- Miro, Don Estevan, his transactions with Wilkinson, 145-180.
- Mississippi River opened to commerce by Wilkinson, 161; by treaty with Spain, 320.
- Nashville, first settlement of, 4-8; attack on fort at, 34-38; appearance in 1784, 75.
- Nick-a-Jack, town of, destroyed, 283.
- Oconostota, plans of, 39; forewarns Boone of hostility from the Indians, 40.
- Primitive churches described, 72.
- Pickering, Secretary of War, inability to understand the needs of the Western settlers, 297.
- Piomingo, his friendship for Robertson, 85; letters to him, 91, 264, 265; his reported death, 273; joins Wayne's army, 294; defeats the Creeks, 309.
- Peyton, John, adventure of, 89.
- Rains, John, the Joab of the colony, 67; heroic resolve to "fight it out here," 55; on the Cold-water expedition, 101; goes to the rescue of Buchanan's Station, 224; at the destruction of Nick-a-jack, 280.
- Robertson, James, the volume, *passim*.
- Rogan, Hugh, his great physical endurance, 103; his intrepid exploit, 121.
- Robertson, Jonathan, his heroic exploits, 219, 260.
- Sevier, John, sends aid to Robertson, 111; expresses information to Shelby which defeats Wilkinson's treason, 171.
- Sevier, Valentine, three sons of, killed by the Creeks, 213, 214; his station attacked, 295.
- Scolacutta (Hanging-Maw), attacks Robertson, 87; friendly to the whites, 289.
- Sebastian, Judge Benjamin, a pensioned traitor, 199.
- Scouts, their important services, 51.
- Shawnees, hostile to Robertson, 225, 273.
- Shelby, Isaac, saves Kentucky to the Union, 169; his action as Governor, 318.
- Shelby, Evan, his death, 246.
- Sleet, a remarkable, 32, 33.
- Smith, Brigadier-General Daniel, makes overtures to McGillivray, 183; is Secretary to the Territory, 322; opinion of Sevier, 322.
- Snake-bite, a bad, 204.
- Tammany Society, its reception of McGillivray, 191.
- "Taking a horn," origin of the phrase, 69.
- Tories, Robertson's reception of, 69.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Ugelayacabe, a traitor to Piomingo,<br>264, 272; returns to his allegi-<br>ance, 293. | Wilkinson, James, his early career,<br>138-143; his treason, 145, 181;<br>enters the United States Army,<br>200. |
| Washington, George, his action, 190,<br>278.  | Wedding, first, at Nashville, 18.  |

THE END.





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